

Vol. 1 – January 2023



# HEIRS

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society

n e w s l e t t e r



*“The hard soil & four months of snow make the inhabitants of the northern temperate zone wiser & abler than his fellow who enjoys the fixed smile of the tropics.”*

*– Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## Welcome to the January 2023 newsletter!

### My final New Year's Resolution... ever!

***I've decided to try one last time to make and keep a resolution starting this January 1st.***

***\*Weight loss (gone today, here tomorrow)? Nope.***

***\*Eat healthier (a sub-resolution of the above, motivated by overindulgence in chocolate et al on New Year's Eve)? Nope.***

***\*Exercise more (another sub-resolution – walking to the fridge doesn't count anymore)? Nope.***

*For as long I can remember (and that's getting spottier), I have been driven to 'fix things'. It seems to have been a trend over my work life...*

*When I framed houses as a young 20-year old, my main job was to look for walls 'out of plumb' & fix those that were.*

*When I became an Animal Health Technologist, I specialized in radiology & surgery. Literally, I would help fix broken bones, broken teeth, & the broken spirits of the furry patients that were brought to us.*

*As history & yearbook rep in Ontario (for the same company that printed our Harrow-Colchester 1792-1992 book), I went about trying to fix the poor layouts, the not-so-humorous captions attributed to staff & students' snapshots, & to eliminate the cookie-cutter, template-based, yearbooks that permeated the region.*

***Those horrible, depersonalizing, silhouettes inserted instead of an actual student photo had to go!***

### ***How hard is it to just take their picture sometime over the entire school year? Really!***

*When I ran my strategic marketing company over 22 years, I found myself fixing marketing plans & strategic goals for many companies, resulting in sales volume growth, company net worth increases readying for multi-national buy-out – all the while trying keeping these folks out of legal hot water.*

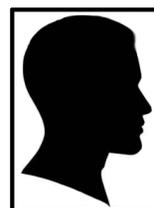
*Even at home, I cringe when I see a crack in a patio stone, a drip from an eavestrough, or a small branch sticking out awkwardly from a bush. **It is exhausting.***

*And last year, I had both hips replaced. So I'm done 'fixing', starting this year. Me & my new titanium friends will no longer seek out what is wrong, what needs fixing, what I can do to correct pathways leading to trouble... it's time to turn that switch off.*

***"I Rick McCormick, solemnly resolve to be the same, not better, this year." (A low bar or an achievable one?)***

***(But... if I could go back & have one last fix, I would want Ted Steele to have been one of my history teachers.)*** *I'm sure his classes were fun, enlightening & memorable.*

*Working recently with Ted compiling his family history book has been a privilege. I viewed wonderful photos, was front row to his ancestors' personal life stories & really got to know them through Ted's distinctive storytelling style. **And, isn't that exactly what we all strive to achieve in writing about our memories?***



**Rick McCormick**

**Birth Place:** Chatham, Ontario

**Favourite Saying:** "We better ask Ted!"

**Pet Peeve:** Missed deadlines

**Probable Destination:** Writing about himself

On November 17th, 2021, HEIRS honoured the 1 founding member and 1st President Gladys Golden, along with the original 1971 board of directors, with a tree planting ceremony at the John R. Park Homestead.

The red oak celebrates not only her work with HEiRS, but her efforts along with long-time member Edith Woodbridge, to ensure the Homestead was enjoyed by residents for generations to come.

As reported in the Harrow News, Gladys's daughter Peggy remarked, "My Mom would be over the moon with what's happened with HEIRS. To imagine that it has continued for fifty years is just phenomenal. I can remember Mom working at the Homestead, dressing up in her (historical) costume. Thank you so much."

**Below: Five of Gladys's children, HEIRS members & friends of the Homestead gathered together for the tree planting.**



Courtesy: Adam Gault, Harrow News & County Print

## From the HEIRS mailbag...



The HEIRS team receives many resaearch requests by phone & email. We're motivated to help answer these queries.

**Interested in joining HEIRS as a member of our research team? Please contact us.**

### Rural Diaries

Catharine A. Wilson, PhD, F.R.S.C. / Redelmeier Professor in Rural History / Department of History / College of Arts at the U. of Guelph has requested a digital copy of the Alfred Arner's diaries. Ms. Wilson is a professor teaching Canadian history.

One project the endowment funds is a dedicated website for rural diaries. The archives can be reviewed at <https://ruraldiaries.lib.uoguelph.ca/>. HEIRS volunteers will be working to digitize the Arner diary, to be featured the their collection.

### Descendants of Thomas A. Clark

A researcher emailed HEIRS seeking names, dates & photos of people, homesteads & factories owned/run by a Clark. Also they're wanting to contact any Clarks that might still reside in the area. HEIRS researchers are investigating, and if you have information you'd like to share, please contact us.

### Photo Info

Stefanie McCarrol, a Toronto archival researcher for documentaries, is searching for the origins of this photo of S.S. #11 school taken in 1965.



### Ezekial Boring

An info request came from a descendant of Ezekial (b.16 Nov 1770; d.1851), a resident of Colchester during his entire adult life. His birth is mentioned in the Boring Family Bible, believed to be maintained by a member of the Affleck family in the Harrow & Colchester area. That entry says that he came from Maryland, USA. He may be the only member of his generation that moved from there, as a Loyalist & joined the Essex Militia under Captain William Caldwell. If the Boring or Monger families in the Colchester region are familiar with Ezekial's story, the researcher is wondering why he made such a substantial relocation? Sarah Monger's father, William, served under Capt. Caldwell & the researcher wonders if that's the underlying connection. HEIRS researchers are investigating, & appreciate any assistance from our readers.

### Heaton Photos

A Heaton descendant is seeking late 1800s Heaton images. The researcher's grandfather was Reginald Heaton, whose father was William Albert Heaton & grandfather David Stafford Heaton. They were all from the Amherstburg-Harrow region.

### Brimner

A Brimner descendant has requested copies of information from our Brimner archive. HEIRS volunteers are preparing this request

### Say cheese!

Seeking a class photo, graduates list or school certificate from 1910 Harrow Collegiate. May contain info on the researcher's father, Merton (Mac) Matthew McCormick, 1892-1966.

**Assume it's out there somewhere!** A researcher is seeking the book: L' Assomption de Sandwich Sepultures 1749 - 2018.

## **Sneak Peek** - Jean Rae Baxter's new historical novel

Accessing dozens of histories, journals & memoirs, websites, archival documents & research papers behind the story in 'Battle on the Ice', Jean provides an exciting tale based on the infamous Patriot Rebellion, beginning with the Battle of Montgomery's Tavern in Toronto in December, 1837

Acknowledging many individuals for their support, Jean notes the valuable assistance from individuals, institutions & organizations from Fort Erie to Pelee Island. In particular, she thanks the Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society (HEIRS) & especially Ted Steele, Rick McCormick and Bill Brundage.

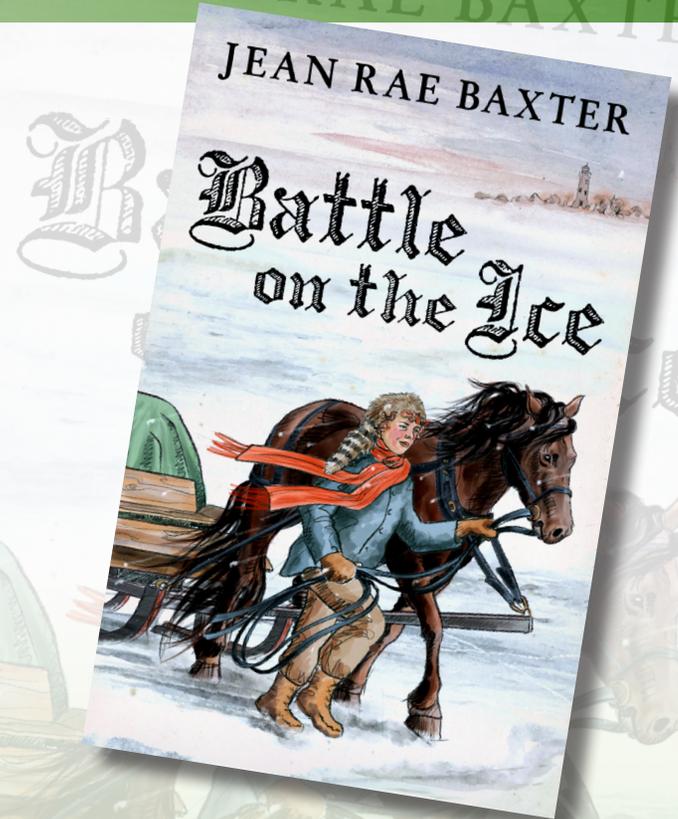
### **Jean provided an overview of her novel...**

"The question has often been asked: Why did the three Fox families living on Pelee Island (George, John and Henry Fox) not flee to the mainland at the time of the Patriot invasion, as William McCormick's family and most of his tenants did? It is through my research at HEIRS, particularly discovering the role played by a fourth brother, Jacob Fox of Gosfield Township, that I may have found the answer. The explanation is in the book. In 'Battle on the Ice' the reader will meet several members of Jacob Fox's & George Fox's family, as well as William McCormick and his family, including the redoubtable Elizabeth Turner McCormick (in old age)."

**Here's the passage that first mentions Pelee Island, through describing a painting by the (fictitious) young artist, Ralph. This passage introduces the main subject of 'Battle on the Ice'. (Miranda is the artist's wife. The narrator, Dory Dickson, is the protagonist.)**

"Miranda was making butter, pumping the dasher up and down in the wooden churn. Ralph was working on the painting that I had noticed the day before. With sunlight streaming through the kitchen window, I now saw clearly that the tower in Ralph's picture was a lighthouse standing on a sandy beach. The top looked snow-white against the blue sky. Near the base of the lighthouse lay a dead tree that had drifted onto the beach. Stripped of its bark, the wood was as white as bone. There were little waves lapping at the shore. Sunshine sparkled on the water. I don't know how Ralph did it, but the picture left no doubt this was a summer day. I could feel the warmth.

Ralph was putting some clouds in the sky. "Where is that?" I asked. "Is it a real lighthouse, or one you imagine?" His brush stopped moving. "It's real all right. That's the lighthouse on Pelee Island, built four years ago. I made the sketch last summer when I was back home visiting my parents.



Now I'm doing it with oil paints."

I watched while he fluffed up a cloud and added a bird – a tiny black V-shaped mark, but it looked just like a gull in flight. "I come from Pelee Island," he told me as he painted. "My parents are tenants of William McCormick. He owns the whole island. It's a very peaceful place, although that's likely to change. There's a rumour that William Lyon Mackenzie's Patriots plan to take over Pelee Island as a first step to invading Canada."

"Let's not speak of that," said Miranda, "I'm tired of hearing about Patriots."

**Jean's novel will be released by Crossfield Publishing in early June 2023, followed by a number of special events in Essex County. We wish Jean great success!**

## Everything new is old again...

**That's one of the interesting findings discovered while using a Christmas present - a subscription to newspapers.com**

For years the majority of my own family research came ancestry.com and familysearch.org. This Christmas, a new subscription to newspapers.com offered something I didn't really think was worth the price. **I'm happy to admit that I was wrong.**

Adding newspapers.com to my research toolbox was like adding condiments on a good burger. Ancestry is the meat of the story, with its basic facts, while info gleaned from newspapers.com provides all the required 'flavour' for expanding our family history knowledge.

I have to admit, I've become a bit addicted to the site; inputting search requests in every spare minute. Pieces of family history, long missing from prior research have been revealed. For instance, the story of my grandmother's sister unfolded from news articles. After entering her name in the site's search field, I discovered a February 13, 1925 'society article' about her visiting a sister in a nearby town.

I already knew her sister passed away from sepsis in February 1925; however, the newspaper articles I found explained that her sister had recently delivered a baby boy. **What?** I knew of two daughters, but in my years of research no record of a baby boy existed. An unknown 'long lost' cousin was discovered.

### Good news!

Recognizing this valuable research tool, HEIRS has now purchased a subscription to newspapers.com, which is accessible at the Resource Centre for members to use during open hours. (see page 10 for adjusted Monday times). (Non-members may use the site while visiting, at its usual \$10 per visit fee.)

Newspapers.com covers a huge variety of papers; however, for those searching Harrow & other local papers, HEIRS also has microfilm and digitized copies.

To enhance research at the Centre, we continue our fundraising efforts towards a new microfilm reader that will enable us to digitize of our older newspapers on microfilm.

### Oh yeah... 'so everything new is old again'

I found a 100 year old article describing the "30 new buildings" boom in Harrow back in 1922, with its population of nearly 1,000.

With a population of 2,710 we were seeing expansion again with several new neighbourhoods and commercial ventures popping up in Colchester S. Our new Harrow Streetscape Project supports the community with its nostalgic farm theme. New dentist & lawyer's offices in the heart of downtown will preserve their historic character.

The Odd Fellows Hall at the corner of King & Queen is also undergoing renovations to restore its former distinction. In this quaint community, dotted with beaches & wineries on a scenic drive route, history is repeating itself.

Harrow Gets Thirty New Buildings Within Year	
Harrow, Nov. 10.—Building operations in the town of Harrow this year have been very active, evidencing the increasing popularity of the town as an ideal home centre. Not less than thirty new houses have been constructed here within the past year. Several business enterprises of a substantial character have also been added to the town's commercial growth in that time.	The new cement blacksmith shop of Frank Herdman, being erected at a cost of \$2,000 is almost completed. John Vincent is putting the finishing touches to his new \$5,000 home here. The structure is a handsome addition to the town's dwellings.
Located only four miles from Kingsville and the lake shore, the proximity of the town to lake resorts is proving a big factor in home location during the past few years. The population of the town is now well towards the 1,000 mark and there is every indication that the census a few years hence will elevate the status of the community to that of one of the major towns of the county.	The three houses started by Forest Ferris several months ago are rapidly nearing completion. These homes are among the finest residences in the town and represent an expenditure of between \$15,000 and \$20,000.
The centre of a thriving agricultural belt and possessing settlers of tried experience in the various farm pursuits here followed, the permanent prosperity of Harrow and district is such as can not be disputed.	Two miles of pavement has recently been completed running east of the town in the direction of Kingsville. The paving is along the second concession.
	Dr. J. D. Collins, who has been confined to his home for the past week with a heavy cold, is recuperating.
	Roy Buchanan is cutting quite a wide swath through the town with his new Durant car.
	Edward Tuffenire has recently sold his farm of 20 acres, for \$12,500 to Curtis Gardiner, of Detroit, now taking up residence on the farm. Mr. Tuffenire has purchased a lot in Harrow and will start the construction of a town home in the spring.
	Dr. Baker has just completed the construction of a fine new cement garage.
	George Sellers has recently sold 50 acres between the sixth and seventh concessions to Henry Langlois.
	Ralph Seamers, Lakeshore farmer, is moving his home to Harrow.
	Mrs. Fred Baltar, Harrow, is very sick.
	Charles Pigeon is completing his new home which is valued at \$4,500.
	Harrow hunters in the north country at Carter, 35 miles from Sudbury, include Harold Ferris, reeve; Rowland Ferris, Carey Drummond, Ezra McLean, Charles Fornash, Ohio; McLean and Foreman are said to have bagged the moose the first day out.
	CONGRESS PLANS STARTED
	Washington, Nov. 10.—With congress called by President Harding to convene in extra session November 20, members of the house appropriations committee were scheduled to meet today with the aim of having several of the appropriation bills ready for the house by the beginning of the regular session immediately following on December 4.
	A Langley bolometer registers a change of one-hundred-millionths of a degree in temperature.

**List down your research questions & come discover all the news that was 'fit to print' back in the day!**



## “Paul”

- by Ted Steele, HEIRS Director

**Looking back to the time when I was a dumb kid ( and I definitely was), I can recall growing up on a Chatham street in a nice quiet neighbourhood.**

*We lived there until I was about 11, surrounded by widows. I never knew who they really were other than their names – Mrs. Newcomb, Mrs Craven, Mrs Lethbridge, and even more that I can still name & pick out the houses where each lived.*

*They must have had husbands, but I cannot remember meeting or even seeing any of them. We surprised Mrs Lethbridge once by coming home early, catching her gathering apples off our tree, with a rake. I never knew why there were so few kids on our street, other than perhaps so many neighbours were elderly.*

**At the end of the street was a tiny square building which anyone could easily mistake for a garden shed. It was the home, & the place of business, of an old & worn-looking man named Paul.**

*Paul was not threatening at all, and spoke little with a heavy Russian sounding accent. Thinking back, he was likely Polish. He was the neighbourhood repairman, able to sew & stitch leather and fabrics for anyone who needed a purse, shoes or a baseball glove repaired. More than once, I took him something to be fixed & noticed his hands; calloused and marked with damage I still attribute to his sewing machine, prominently set up behind the old counter. He did the job & charged a quarter or so for most repairs. I always wondered about him, how he wound up where he was, struggling yet making his own way in the world.*

*Our family moved to a better neighbourhood and Paul passed out of my life, but I never forgot him. Eventually I decided that he very possibly was an immigrant who fled the war in Europe & may have endured very bad times, perhaps even the loss of family members along the way.*

**Paul affected the way I view people who are different, as I realized I needed to be more understanding of people less fortunate.**

*Lately I’ve been trying to find a way to tell a local history story without being demeaning or insulting.*

*My brother-in-law in Amherstburg used to refer to a local character as the “sheeny man”, and others in this area also remember perhaps the same man. Windsor has its stories too, but they paint a picture of a man who had no better way to earn a living, and so became the local recycler, making his rounds with his wagon, buying or collecting all manner of items that he could resell.*

*Maybe a refugee, or a member of a minority group, or just someone who had lived a difficult life. But however the story was told, it carried negative connotations I did not want to include, which tended to denigrate a religion or race, – that was not the true picture. In reality, no particular type of person was specifically a “sheeny man”, it really referred to the job one carried out.*

*Applying labels to a person & groups who lead lives different from our own, is insulting, very unflattering, and even ridiculing.*

**For 2023, let’s all make the resolution to “cut each other a little slack” and be less judgemental in our daily lives.**



## Layers of Harrow

- presented by Brian Leslie, HEIRS Secretary

### The Winters of My Content...

I was born in January 1949. It was a good year & good time for Baby-Boomers. World War II had ended a mere four years prior & it was time to rebuild the economy, the nation & the population. My parents married in 1946 & answered the domestic call immediately upon my father's honourable discharge from the Royal Canadian Navy. He had literally circumnavigated the globe, and then Windsor, Ontario and civilian life and work became his world.

To this day, Winter has remained my favourite season even though I am cold 365 days a year. January is named after Janus, the god of the open door, a time of new beginnings. **I love snow!** I'm reminded of the lyrics of a song written by poet laureate, Gilles Vigneault, about his own home province of Quebec:

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**“Mon pays, ce n'est pas mon pays. C'est l'hiver.”  
My country is not my country. It is winter.**

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In elementary school, if it snowed during class time, learning for me was pre-empted by an overwhelming need to be outside for recess. I failed physics & chemistry in high school, but I did learn that water has three primary states: water, ice & steam. I am a self-confessed 'snow-guy' & can't help myself. I get giddy when it snows. Older age dictates emotional reserve & decorum, but snow literally melts away any social inhibitions for me.

The singer Ronnie Hawkins, once said, speaking of himself "... having a 16 year old brain in a 60 plus year-old body is a bad combination." I expect that I'll probably die happy, playing in the snow outside my nursing home window.

I am a 'self-defined' local snow expert. I've lived through 73 winters. Like life, some winters were happy, others not so much. I even wrote a song called 'Winter of Life'... "Winter of life, with the snow falling down, it whirls and it swirls as it covers the ground. Pure and white till the spring sees it melt away." (It's on You Tube.)

One year, I missed two months of high school with a badly broken left leg; I had a cast literally from 'crotch to toe'. No one felt sorry for me as I could run faster than any kid in the school by 'pole vaulting' on crutches & even amazed my parents by putting my feet on the top of the refrigerator. The day after my cast was off I went outside to shovel snow out of the entire driveway, still basically on crutches.

In subsequent years the 401 overpass at Dougall/Howard in Windsor became my winter playground. I even tried tobogganing over a small tree, standing up in Olympic fashion. **The tree prevailed, I did not.**

Like everybody driving in winter, I have known times of 'supernatural protection'. In 1975, I drove safely past 2, chain-car collisions on the 401 that totaled 60 vehicles between Chatham & London.

I think it's a given that my post-physical life will include "...snowflakes and warm woollen mittens during the silver-white winter...", accompanied by Julie Andrew's voice. As a concession to adult realities, the soundtrack will likely alternate with one of my favourite blues artists. **The bottom line is that I love winter.**

Some of you 'snowbirds' will particularly appreciate my sentiments as you read this HEIRS newsletter on a tropical beach, or from a second home in Florida.

**“SNOWFLAKES THAT STAY ON MY NOSE  
& EYELASHES, SILVER WHITE WINTERS  
THAT MELT INTO SPRING...”**



## Harrow, As It Used to Was...

- presented by Ted Steele, HEIRS Director

### Unsolved mysteries...

Among the boxes of 'Steele Stuff' that have found their way to me over the years, is a truly remarkable item.

A clay seal, which was apparently attached to a land grant from the British Crown providing land to a deserving Loyalist. Therefore, it's over 200 years old and is still in incredibly good shape considering it was 'passed along' without any special care taken. I discovered it in a plain manilla envelope, no labelling or padding involved.



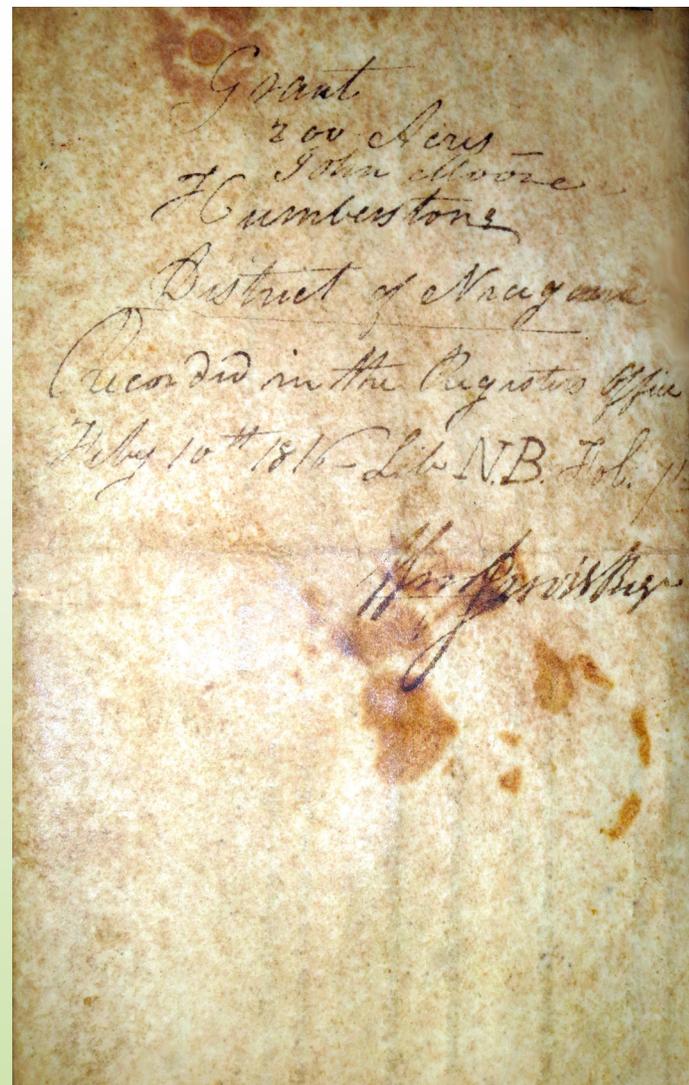
### So what is the mystery?

Why is it in my Steele files? It was once attached to the grant of one John Moore, and there has never (to my knowledge at least) been a marriage between a Steele and a Moore?

A bit of research identified the original owner, and he lived in the same general area (Humberstone Township) near Port Colborne as did my G-G-G-G grandfather William Steele. I wrote to Loyalist Trails, a UEL publication and they wrote & placed

the story in one of their issues. I also contacted the local UEL group for some help, but found none forthcoming. No Moore response at all thus far.

**I have no idea how it came into Steele hands, or why.**

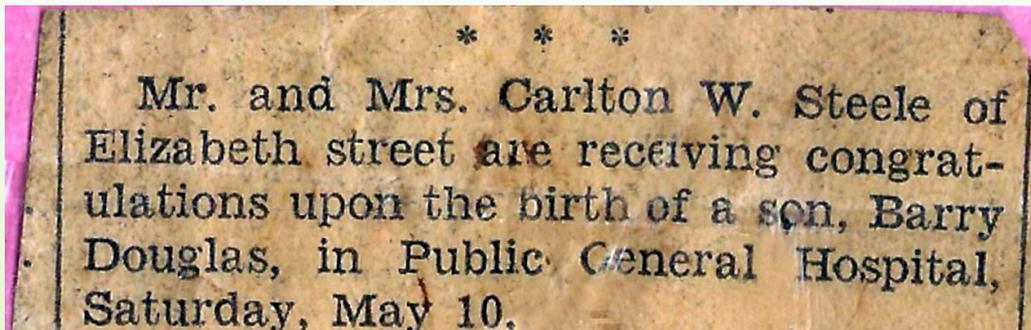


## Harrow, As It Used to Was... cont'd

A second mystery in my files is a small news clipping from the Chatham Daily News.

It shows that my parents, Carlton and Frances Steele announced the birth of their son, Barry Douglas, born Saturday, May 10. It also gave our street address (being true from the years 1939 to 1965).

There is no year attached to the clipping, but a bit of detective work told me that **the only May 10th that was a Saturday**, that also fit the stated facts, had to be in 1941.



So where's the mystery in this?

I have 4 brothers, but no Barry Douglas, and none were born on May 10th or in 1941.

A search in the Chatham Daily News microfilm files turned up no further mention of Barry Douglas, and both of those 2 names do not mesh with any other family names. No local cemetery records have him listed either, as I thought that a crib death might be a possibility.

Barry Douglas apparently lived long enough to be named, but the Church records listed only my 4 brothers and I, and no mention of him.

My parents, entirely in keeping with their relationship and personalities, never mentioned him and no other Steele family member of senior age, has any idea who he might have been.

There are 2 things left to try.

One is a search of hospital birth records, and the other choice would be checking through the birth records in Ottawa. I am considering doing both, but have not followed up yet.

So, expect to find a surprise or 2 in your own family story, all tucked away in those boxes from Grandma, or Mom & Dad.

Surprises do keep family history interesting!



# CONTACTS

## Board of Directors

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Lorrie Stephenson, [lorrie67@gmail.com](mailto:lorrie67@gmail.com)

### Secretary

Brian Leslie, [heirsont@gmail.com](mailto:heirsont@gmail.com)

### Treasurer

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### Resource Centre

Jackie Baldwin  
[jacquelinebaldwin11@gmail.com](mailto:jacquelinebaldwin11@gmail.com)

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Ann & John Brush

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Ted Steele, [historynut@outlook.com](mailto:historynut@outlook.com)

### Newsletter

Ted Steele, 519 733-3456

## Membership

\$30 CDN/U.S. per person or couple. Memberships run May 1st - April 30th, annually.  
Please provide phone, postal address, email & family names you are researching.

## Payments

**Make cheques out to: HEIRS, 243 McAfee St., PO Box 53, Harrow ON, Canada N0R 1G0**

**E-transfer payments or donations to HEIRS? Send to: [heirsont@gmail.com](mailto:heirsont@gmail.com)**

**Members research for free. Non-members using research library: \$10 per visit (+ any photocopy fees)**

## Newsletter / Meetings

Published 9 times / year. Meetings held on 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (December excepted).  
Receive full colour newsletter by email, or a B&W print version by regular post.

## Resource Centre:

**- New open hours Mondays 5:30-8PM, Tuesdays & Thursdays 10AM-3 PM -**

**Please contact us at [heirsont@gmail.com](mailto:heirsont@gmail.com) or (519) 738-3700 to confirm our 'open status' prior to arrival.**

519 738-3700

[heirsont@gmail.com](mailto:heirsont@gmail.com)

[www.HEIRS.ca](http://www.HEIRS.ca)