



# HEIRS

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society

n e w s l e t t e r



*Enjoy your Summer!*

**School may be out for the summer, but our summer students are gearing up to assist our librarians at HEIRS. We've hired two students with support from the Canada Summer Jobs program.**

*Ryan Kuzniar, a University of Windsor grad with a BA in history has a keen ear to the ground when it comes to local history, and will be pursuing his Bachelor of Education in September.*

*Tristan Cullum is a strong academic student intrigued by local history. Entering his third year at University of Toronto - St. George as a History Specialist, he is a founder of the Trinity College Historical Society.*

*We'd like to extend a warm welcome to both our student employees, who begin their training at HEIRS on June 19th, and will be at*

*our office Monday-Friday, 9-4 until August 18th. Our office will be open for researchers during these hours. Our office closes August 19 - Sept 4, with regular hours resuming Sept. 5th.*

**A few events to enjoy on your summer days....**

**June 17th**

**Tecumseh Heritage Centre: Yard sale, 10-2 at 12340 Tecumseh Rd. E. (Tecumseh).**

**Heritage Colchester: Yard sale, 10-3 at the Colchester Schoolhouse, 195 Bagot St. Come by & say hello to HEIRS members at our info booth.**

**June 22**

**Our own fun event – our inaugural Strawberry Social. See below.**

*- Lorrie Stephenson*

## Strawberry Social

**- our next meeting on June 22nd, 1:30 PM**

*Harrow-Colchester Arena Community Meeting Room*

*We invite our members & their friends to savour some of summer's sweetness. Our inaugural 'Strawberry Social' will feature sweet treats & one-of-a-kind trivia questions.*

*Come with a friend, or two, for an afternoon of strawberry desserts & refreshments.*

*Our Directors, past & present, have created a unique trivia experience for all, whether your answers are right... or wrong. A fun afternoon to bring us all together.*

**This event is free-to-attend, though we'll be collecting donations to support HEIRS.**





## May Meeting Recap...

- by Lorrie Stephenson, President, HEIRS

**Our Board of Directors election was conducted at the recent May AGM meeting, resulting in a full slate of directors ready to tackle the many tasks we have at HEIRS, together.**

Thanks to everyone nominated, elected, and to those members who took the time to vote.

**We especially wish to thank previous board member Ted Steele for wearing many hats over a decade of service while on the board. Thankfully Ted will remain 'on duty' with us to provide his guidance, experience and articles.**



**HEIRS Board of Directors**

**Seated: Bonnie Storey, Esther Meerschaut, Shelby Wye**  
**Standing: Brian Leslie, Kat Bezaire, Lorrie Stephenson, Milo Johnson, Marta Leardi Anderson, Jackie Baldwin**

### **Minutes excerpt:**

#### **Lorrie Stephenson reviewed the current board of directors:**

Lorrie Stephenson, Bonnie Storey & Brian Leslie have 2 years remaining in their terms. Jackie Baldwin & Esther Meerschaut, have 1 year remaining in their terms. Ted Steele's term has concluded & he has resigned. Ted remains on as a senior advisor.

#### **This meant that 4 vacant positions were available for this election.**

Esther Meerschaut from the Nominations Committee, reviewed the nominations previously submitted. They included Milo Johnson, Marta Leardi-Anderson (Lorrie accepted the nomination on her behalf), Katherine (Kat) Bezaire, and Shelby Wye (Adam Gault accepted the nomination on her behalf).

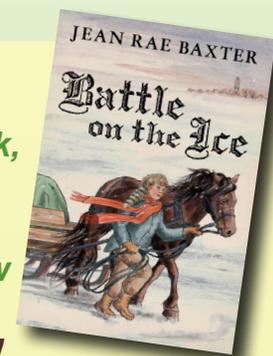
Lorrie Stephenson asked if there were any other nominations. There were no new nominations submitted at the meeting.

**Bonnie Storey motioned to include the nominees to the Directors Board of HEIRS. This was seconded by Esther, and carried unanimously.**

At a later meeting, it was determined that the four new directors will all serve a 3-year term. The Board of Directors determined that Lorrie Stephenson will be President; Kat Bezaire will serve as Vice President; Bonnie Storey as Treasurer and Shelby Wye as Secretary.

### **September 28th Meeting (1:30 PM)**

**At our 1st meeting after the Summer break, HEIRS member, author Jean Rae Baxter provides a select reading from her new book – "Battle on the Ice". Her book is now for sale at HEIRS – add it to your summer reading list. More info coming next issue!**



## May meeting recap... cont'd

**They say what's old is new again, and that applies to the updated HEIRS website too! We have completely overhauled the website to better serve our members, researchers, and the curious.**

With the driving force of Jenny Obermok of MediaAddict with us, countless hours of her advice & design experience were donated to this project. Not only did we maintain the previous site's materials, but made functional updates and additions to provide researchers an improved scope of the depth of the resources available in the HEIRS library. More historical data of general interest will also be included on the site.

In last month's newsletter, we reviewed the value of our Land Records, an important research tool to find when & where people bought or leased property. To aid researchers, we've added our index of Land Record names & dates to the site. Once a name is found, one can visit the HEIRS library where a research assistant will then locate the **original** land deed for review. Combined with other resources found at HEIRS: newspapers, family genealogy files & books, ancestry.com & newspapers.com subscription access, a more complete historic picture can be revealed.

**If you've ever wonder if there's a particular research book at HEIRS, we've now made it easier to find out.**

Our newly created directory of research materials including genealogy books, historic maps, photos, etc, will be available in the first phase of our roll out.

**Our new site is a long-awaited upgrade, and we're excited to showcase its new look, features & importantly, more opportunities to work on your family research.**

**The site will be going live very soon, and of course, we'll notify our members as soon as it is.**

**AGRICULTURE**

**GENEALOGY FILES**

**PDF FILE**

**eGift Card**

**Building Your Family Tree**

**NEW BOOK OF COLCHESTER VITALS**

**In our next issue we'll explore more of the features added to assist members, like the expanded online payment methods to purchase books, renew subscriptions & to donate funds for our major projects.**



## Back to the beach...

- by Lorrie Stephenson

*During summers in the first half of the 20th century, the beaches at Colchester & Oxley attracted hundreds of visitors – both local & American. Using photos from the HEIRS library, as well as newspapers.com via HEIRS computer access, let's look back at some of our beloved beaches.*

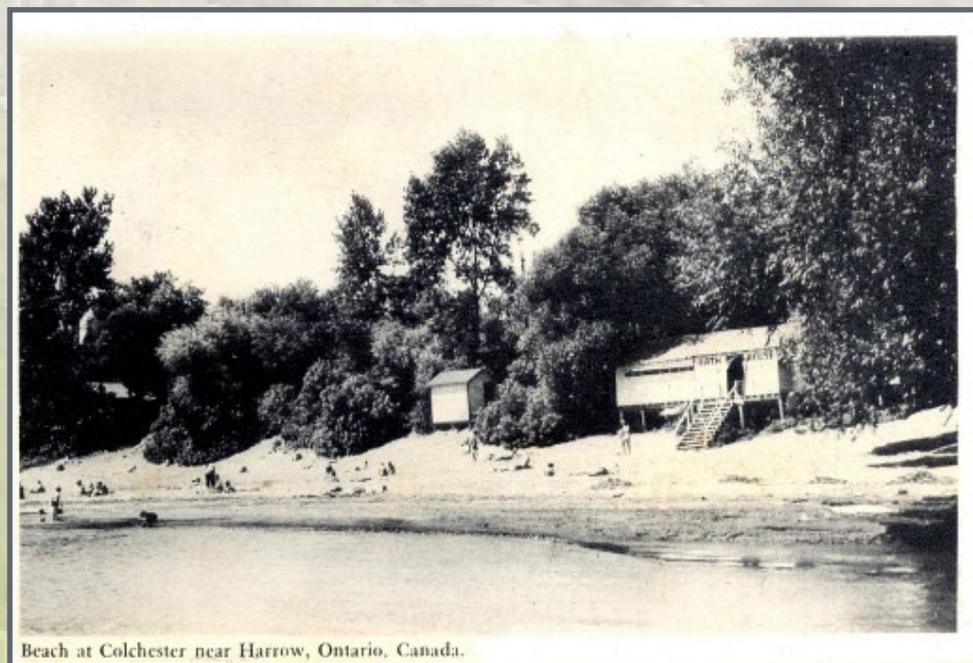
*Beautiful beaches are scattered along Lake Erie's shoreline stretching between Colchester & Oxley. Most of these beaches are now extensions of private property, clubs & resorts, but the idyllic expanse of Colchester Beach remains available for all.*



Colchester Beach



*Colchester Dock & Bathing Beach, near Harrow, Ontario. Recently the Colchester Beach & its surrounding area received many upgrades and improvements.*



Beach at Colchester near Harrow, Ontario, Canada.

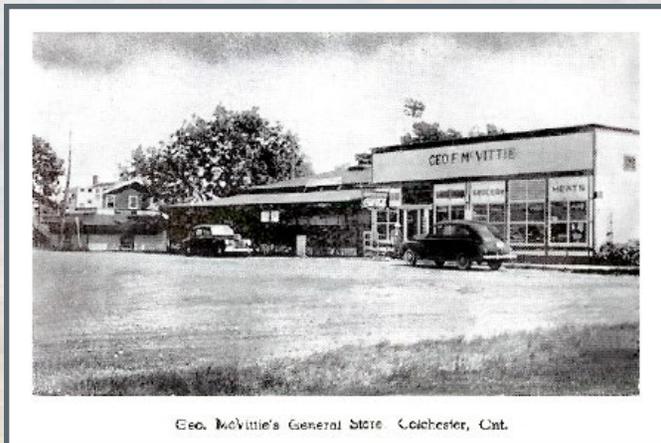
*The Frams operated a lunch counter & bath houses for visitors, as shown in 1938.*

## Beaches... cont'd

**Just up from Colchester Beach was the Colchester Casino & McVittie's general store.** Founded by George McVittie in 1925, Colchester Casino drew visitors from Essex County & the United States. The dance floor could accommodate 500 dancers and was surrounded by screens.

Adjoining the casino was a meat market, restaurant & their general store.

Shown here is a SWODA-sourced postcard from 1945.



Geo. McVittie's General Store Colchester, Ont.

**In 1947, RJ Reaume advertised the sale of beachfront property a mile east of Colchester.** In the spring of 1950 Reaume Park opened, which included tennis courts, beach bathing & a cafeteria. Park admission was \$1 per carload and it became a favourite for community picnics. In 1958, Reaume Park was purchased by the Giovanni Caboto Club of Windsor.

Improvements were made & the cliff above the beach was tiered. Events were held & the park became a favourite of campers. Local kids took swimming lessons in the pool & motorhomes found a cooler retreat under the trees.

**In 2020, the property changed ownership and transformed once again into the Lungovita Beach Retreat.**

**Further east along County Road 50 (18A), what was once referred to as Oxley Beach eventually became Erie View and Ravine Hotel resorts.** While the Colchester Casino by Colchester Beach was a centre of dancing & entertainment, the Ravine Hotel and the Erie View Hotel on Oxley Beach catered to families.

**In 1922, the Erie View Hotel began as a small resort cottage built by Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Malone.** It grew quickly to host 60 large rooms in four separate buildings on its 5 acres. Buildings were set among a wooded area, above the long sandy beach. There were tennis courts & a hotel dining room that accommodated up to 130 people.

**Around 1947, the Erie View Hotel was sold and became the Holy Family Retreat House, a spiritual retreat for laymen.** In the 1960s, the Holy Family Founders' Club raised funds for updates and expansion of the buildings. The Holy Family Retreat House still functions as a spiritual retreat today.



Erie View Motel

Newspapers have reported that tourists attracted to the beaches & resorts at Oxley & Colchester usually shopped in Harrow, supporting local businesses. **Although improvements were made over time, what hasn't changed is the family-friendly beach & marina, remaining a centre for summer excitement.**



**“Gardening is cheaper than therapy,  
and you get tomatoes.”** (Anonymous)

- by Rick McCormick, HEIRS member

**The traditional May 24th ‘safe planting’ date for Ontario is well-behind us now, and the 79th anniversary of the invasion of Normandy by WW2 allied troops has recently passed.**

**But I decided to blend these two ‘seemingly diverse’ events and look back at the history of Canada’s Victory Gardens.**

*The first time I heard the term ‘Victory Garden’, was on the television show of the same name, which ran from 1975-2015. Many hosts presided over the 40 seasons of the shows that WGBH Boston’s PBS channel broadcasted Saturday afternoons. Only after a few seasons did I eventually come to realize not just gardening tips, but the real importance of Victory Gardens during the war years.*

**Victory Gardens were actually initiated during WW1, although not adopted on mass by Canadians at first. Interestingly, for both world wars, the goals of their programs remained the same...**

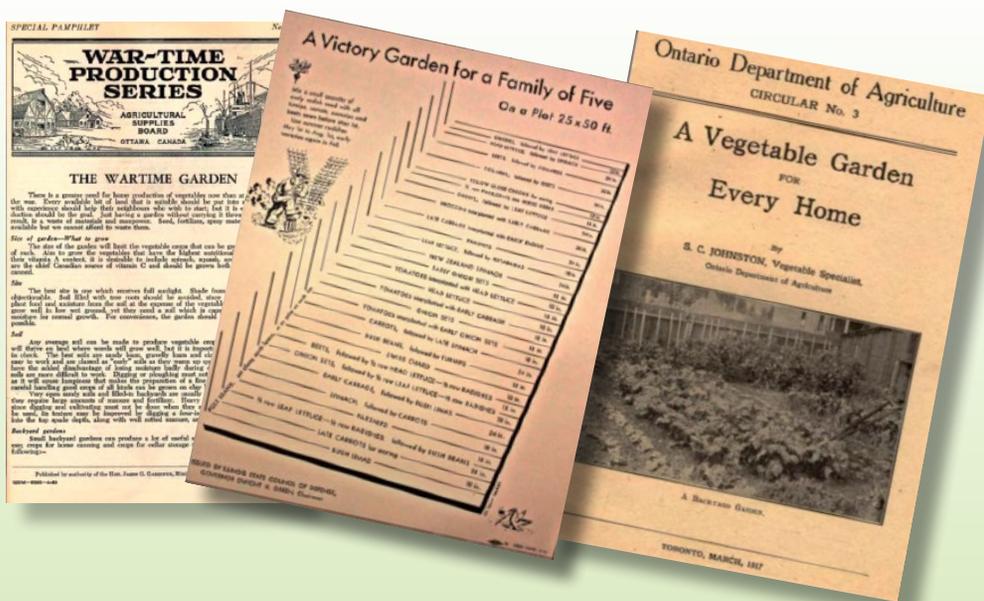
- To help Canadians at home learn to better feed themselves during the war through self-gardening.
- To increase food support to Canadian & allied troops & families overseas, by reducing food demand at home
- To boost morale & reduce the anxiety of war by the act of physically contributing to the war effort.



## Victory Gardens... cont'd

Sometimes called 'war gardening', every Canadian household had the opportunity & was encouraged by the government to grow fresh vegetables in their own backyards, or on church grounds, city parks and even playgrounds.

In 1918, the Canada Food Board produced a set of pamphlets to aid the new 'city farmers'. Essentially targeting urban folks, it provided guidance on the type of crops to grow, when & how to plant them, and when to harvest. It also promoted the use of community-oriented gardens with the sharing of garden tools, to reduce desperately-needed materials for the war effort.



Between the two world wars came the Great Depression years, with an astounding number of people engaged in what was then called 'relief gardening'. It proved to be the most productive time for urban garden participation and output. Seemingly, every small space was used to grow food for the expanding number of unemployed folks, trying to get scratch out a living for their families.



During WW2, government departments turned to Victory Gardens & promoted War Bonds.

Using propaganda posters to push both programs, gardening activity expanded once again, but it never reached the peak levels of the Depression years.

Hundreds of posters were developed to send motivational messages to Canadians – the US, Australia & the United Kingdom used the same successful strategy.

Supplies heading overseas grew as mandatory rationing restricted volumes of key grocery items like sugar, flour & soap. Often this meant trading your coffee 'sugar ration' to someone else for their laundry detergent in order to clean cloth diapers – likely a tough decision to make some days.

After WW2, folks now had the knowledge, experience & interest to continue vegetable gardening. During other challenging times, like the recent Covid pandemic, people turned to seed houses with more interest while planning for the next growing season. With continued high prices of perishables today, once again a surge in growing 'what you can' at home has gained popularity.

Out of necessity or just the enjoyment of getting your hands dirty, gardening is big business now. Don't we all agree that home-grown tomatoes taste so much better than store bought? So this summer, let's give a knowing nod to those early Victory Gardens.



## “Tintypes need good homes.”

(contact HEIRS during business hours)

*If a litter of puppies is left at your doorstep, you'd give them immediate shelter to protect them, although they can't all stay. They'll take a lot of effort to keep & a lot of room... so they need to find a good home. A similar scenario plays out at HEIRS from time to time with donations.*

*As an example, this group of tintypes was donated to HEIRS rather than be discarded in the trash. They had no connection to the donor, so they were expendable. HEIRS now needs to find them new owners. Like those puppies, each may get its own, new place to reside.*

### Here's your chance to get involved in preservation!

*If you recognize the people in these unidentified tintypes, the images are yours. After June 15th, if no family claims them, then anyone can have the actual tintype(s), and if you wish, the improved digital version file can be emailed to you too.*

*In either case, please consider a small 'finder's fee' donation to HEIRS to offset 'food & lodging' that we've provided since they arrived on our doorstep, and to cover transportation to their new home.*

### Take a close look – do they might resemble you?

*It's all about preserving the past, even if we can't identify these late 19th century souls currently.*

**Contact the HEIRS office to claim your relatives or request your favourites for your collection!**

#### NOTE:

*Smaller images are original scanned tintypes.*

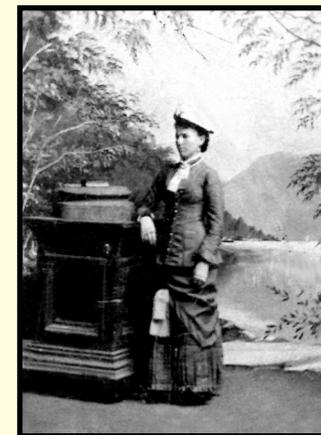
*Larger images have been digitally improved.*

*Photos were 'named' only to ease ordering.*

**Zoom in for better details.**



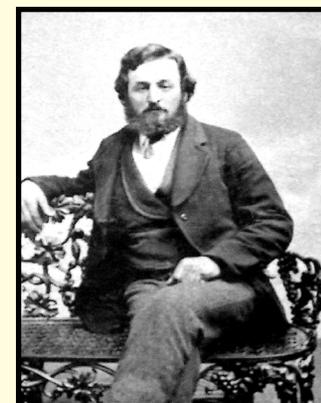
Niagara Man



Proud Miss



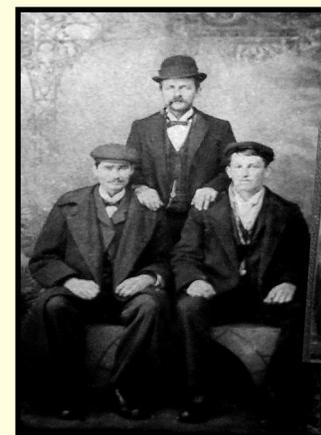
Banjo Duo



Chill Guy



Six Ladies



Hat Trio

# CONTACTS

## Board of Directors

### President

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

### Vice-President

Kat Bezaire, [heirsont@gmail.com](mailto:heirsont@gmail.com)

### Secretary

Shelby Wye, [shelbywye@gmail.com](mailto:shelbywye@gmail.com)

### Treasurer

Bonnie Storey, [bgstorey45@gmail.com](mailto:bgstorey45@gmail.com)



## Directors

Marta Leardi Anderson

Jackie Baldwin

Milo Johnson

Brian Leslie

Esther Meerschaut

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## 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.

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## Payments

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

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

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

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## Newsletters & Meetings

HEIRS newsletter is published 9 times/year: colour digital version by email or B&W print version by regular post.

Meetings held on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (July, August & December excepted).

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## Resource Centre:

**Summer Hours: Monday-Friday 9am- 4pm until Aug 18th**

Office Closed: August 19th to Sept 4th. Regular hours return Tuesday Sept. 5th

519 738-3700

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