

# OMA 2009 Awards of Excellence

## Objectives

These awards are designed to:

- recognize outstanding contributions to the Ontario museum community, with emphasis on innovation;
- advance the museum profession in Ontario;
- encourage high standards of excellence in the museum field.

# 2009 OMA Award of Excellence

## Friends of Joseph Schneider Haus



## THE RECORD

Weekly news  Weekly news

Local news

Fig, I would like to apologize for not being here because this is an occasion worth celebrating.

It's hard to believe that its been 25 years since this historic place opened its doors.

As I has changed in the community since. Got a lot more.

Before the money to restore the historical and grounds was approved, there was a passing committee, and the money I needed to do the job right. At the time I was the Record's sports editor and I was, carefully, definitely, over budget and every cent was in question. I actually had the club at the room they had assembled a regular car in five months, when the restaurant was on the agenda.

I was the messenger who had to go to the club.

One of the first things I learned about the history of this is that it progressed, in large part because the people who lived here showed grace, generally AND integrity. People were not so far from the truth, this was not the case. In fact, you can't see and huge things did not, and I had people, no matter how poor or old, here, I had been spending money on historical preservation.

So, to be to pass along some heart congratulations to Ken McLaughlin for understanding the significance of this project. Also thank for providing the political will to make changes, the members of the board and the people of the club. They talk when not another story was published, and to Susan Burke who has done a tremendous job convincing what a better world there is in a more active.

I found out more than 25 years ago that people cared about this project. So much so, that The Festival had been created to celebrate every year that we had the same Saturday and Sunday. Even the good ones in retrospect, the stories I did help me really understand it in context.

If I can add my two cents, time money will speed Congratulations.

  
David McCurdy  
Manager Editor  
The Record

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Two major articles related to journals and collectible Hyla. The first was a piece on the history and a piece on the current world of the hobby. The second was a piece on the hobby world. The one appeared in the June 2000 issue of the Summer Supplement 120, the day before the official opening.



This letter was written by the manager, editor or the Record, David McCurdy, in response to an invitation to speak on the occasion of the launch of the museum's 25th anniversary year celebration in February 2000. McCurdy was prevented by ill health from attending, so this letter read aloud by his daughter, China Agnew, served as general acknowledgment of the museum's dedication to the project and the many people who have cared for the restoration team.

### CHAPTER FOUR

## Making the Haus a Home Furnishing & Equipping



The "living history" model envisioned by the Restoration Committee and well-known to museum goers presented a special challenge in 1980, as it continues to do to museums working with historic buildings today. As the name implies, the intent is to make the buildings come alive, to humanize them and the history they preserve. If effectively done, disbelief is suspended and visitors are transported into a fourth dimension in time and place, where generations long departed play out their lives and where time travellers from the present can actively or passively be a part.





The color keytone for the restoration period was found at the head of the main staircase where a partition had hidden the original paint layers and the signed board that dated them on a fateful day in October of 1857. The images elsewhere show the upper hall with the partition at the top of the stairs in place; the partition removed with oak board protecting the samples; the paint/plaster surfaces revealed; a photomicrograph of the chiseled paint sample that confirms the grey layer to be the third; the board signed and dated by young David Schneider during this particular home renovation.



*"I remember being introduced to Susan when she arrived and she was like a breath of fresh air—working with the boys and teaching them, keeping them in line. She's a stickler for details and they didn't always want to do things exactly as she wanted them done so she kept on their case."*

—Bev Grierzon

**March 27** Having about 130 pegs hand turned to replace those missing in the peg rail...discovered holes on window frames where pegs were once inserted to hold the curtains back...long since filled and painted over. Holes were stuffed with stones, pieces of newspaper, a railway schedule dated 1877, fragments of textile...

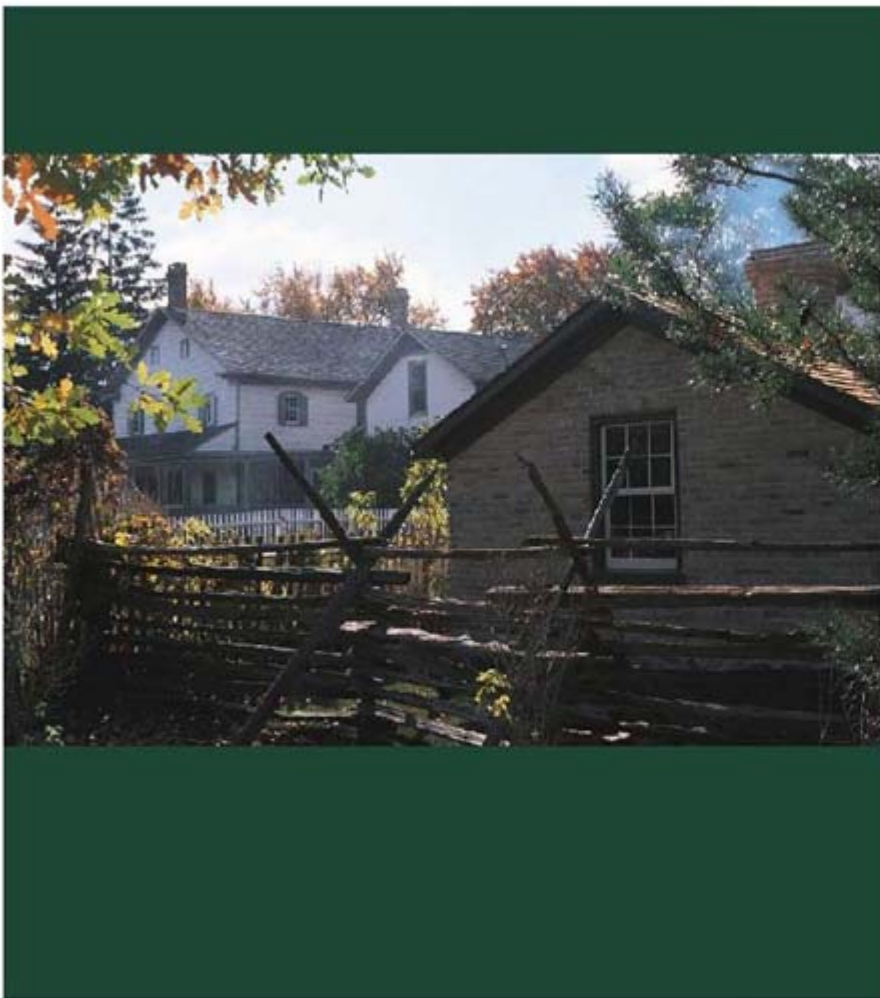
The issue of light was an important one for families living in rural settings before gas or kerosene was available. Daylight ordered their days and proscribed that they live the "curly-to-bed" adage every day of their lives. Candles were an expensive commodity, as was whale oil, two of the most common ways interior spaces could be lit. The making of candles, though labour-intensive, was a more cost-effective means whereby a modicum of light could be provided for those long, dark, Canadian winter nights. So in the fall, when the butchering was done and lard accumulated, candle making was sure to follow, the melted fat poured into moulds or coated on cotton wicks by the dipping method. The lard-burning betty lamp was the lamp of choice for the Pennsylvania Germans and each family would surely have one, but this humble device produced little more than one candle power of light. The number and size of the windows, then, the siting of the house relative to the path of the sun and objects hindering the passage of natural light into the rooms of the house where work had to be done, all were issues for homeowners before kerosene became generally available post 1854.

The use of curtains was thus impractical for most rooms and certainly not necessary for privacy in a rural setting. Moreover, textiles were much too valuable in the early years of settlement to squander on window treatments or floor coverings. It was no surprise to discover, therefore, that the curtain-back evidence indicated the use of curtains only in the sitting room, the guest bedroom and the Kammer (downstairs bedroom) — none in the working areas of the house. What was interesting was the



Reproductions were made (left) to replace the original hand-turned hardwood pegs (right) that were used throughout the house in the peg rails and the window frames in rooms where curtains were used. Below they hold back the stretched curtains level with where the double-hung sash meet. Photo: Paul Dunn





CHAPTER THREE

## Around the Haus

Landscape, Archaeology, Outbuildings



But Joseph Schneider excavated that early morning in 1867 when the wagon finally came to a full stop on Lot 17, two single acres — cedar, maple and white pine, some trees described later by gardeners as *Larix* as being 5 feet in diameter. There were some low mounds of earth and to the north, in the direction of the hills, rolling hills of sandy soil. About a quarter mile west of the Great West of the Woods, which ran through a corner of his property, was a number of earthen mounds during a long swamp and marshy to the southeast. It was near the banks of the stream, close to a natural spring that South took their first dwelling, a modest one-story log cabin that was born to the Schindlers and their seven children for close to a decade. Joseph and J.C. — *The Schindlers' Story* (Bklynite, 1925:6)

When the curtain was raised that late fall day in 1979 when she drove down Queen Street and, contemplating her new charge for the first time was "a fully established old frame house, a diagonally cross-hatched garage sagging toward its sandy soil, and a dirt parking lot backed by a ramshackle main factory building surrounding itself into the yard. In front, several tall Norway spruce trees all too often using the view of the old station from the street and close by, a 1200's work and pop music house were building toward the end of a long, long, neighborhood in a land of (over)time." *A Carter's Diary* (November 1979)





Once the public program was wound down, the archaeologists faced the serious task of excavating deeper in their attempt to locate the first walk below. Here, the floor joists, stone foundation wall and the corner hearth can be seen. (Photo: Foundation for Public Archaeology)



1994 peaked at 21,466, and the popularity of the school and exhibition program continued to build. The landscaping team prepared for the post-continuation cleanup and the implementation of their plan for the historic sections, which would proceed the following spring. Research on the Pennsylvania German kitchen garden was also intensifying with documentary research, personal interviews and site visits to rural farmhouse gardens.

The development of the concept for the four-acre vegetable garden was a fascinating piece of research, it encompassed so many culture-specific topics that could ultimately enrich the general interpretation of the family's lifestyle. The garden, once mature, would provide produce to interpret the foodways of the Pennsylvania Germans, and traditions relating to their folk medicines would reflect the culture's folkways, including their distinct "Dutch" dialect, and would reveal much of the Pennsylvania German folklore and superstition that has long informed their use of plants and their planting customs. A unique aspect of the project was that the applied research would be dynamic and appropriately "organic" — the garden would continue for the foreseeable future to be a work-in-progress, changing from year to

year as plant materials were sourced and tested and evolving systematically in response to information that interpreters would glean from on-site informants. In its totality, the project would include not only the garden proper but also related garden structures such as cold frames

Val Harrison helps school children across soil samples.



*I was one of the students who did the dig. I was still at university and didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't think I was going to get into museums.*

*That was my last summer job ever because I was doing what I wanted to do. In grade 5, I had wanted to be an Egyptologist and this was close enough I just loved it.*

*We uncovered the walk issues. Despite the fact the boards were still intact, they must have just thrown dirt overtop and the stone foundation was there. I remember lifting those boards and finding old pins and buttons and a lice comb and thinking, "Well, that's all part of the history." This was where the Schneiders would have done their work. You could picture it in your mind. I was thrilled. This was history, and it evinced questions that the house might not have revealed before the restoration. We were helping to add to the story. All of us who love history want to make more of a story of it.*

*We students had a chance to meet the staff, but I never had any idea that later I'd be applying for a teacher/interpreter job here.*

Val Harrison



The backfill around the board of the cooking fireplace has preserved bits of wood, kerosene and ash buttons.

## THIS OLD HAZEL



(Above) The masons first support the masonry of the bakeoven and then the chimney from its own masonry in place. They split (left) and then masonry reconstruct the oven, using a planned form rather than building over a pile of wet mud, as is done in some areas. A line is used on the chimney to mark the completion of the masonry.



The split wall of the brick, drying compartments within masonry reconstructs in place. The fire chamber below is built with a masonry floor.

compartments (Schrijnaren) and the cooling chamber were rebuilt virtually unchanged. By early fall the raising of a green tree on the chimney, in the traditional fashion, announced that the construction was completed over the masonry oven; the bake oven was ready for its first bake test.

We held a true celebration that fall, launching an exhibit, Friday, Bake Day in the gallery and introducing our public to the historic bakeoven/bakeoven house, now the Scheider's wonderful new bake house with its companion compartments. Situated behind the garden, a hole hatched from the kitchen door than its predecessor, no doubt, it nestled into the landscape, looking as if it had always been there. And the Vernon Martin family was clearly excited to be showing their bake house to us; they and their extended family arrived for the opening reception,



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on merrily by school bus, downtown buggery driving long since having ceased to be a realistic mode of transportation for the Old Order. They watched in fascination as the baking emerged from the oven and relished the taste, chiefly pies it miraculously produced. Not surprisingly, they are the exclusive owners of a hand-baked bake oven, very one of the oldest family members remembered,

Bake: Loren Widomack, JAR, LUS, poses in front of the bake oven with a good working oven, one that is transported. Robert Goulet, The Last "oven bread" recipe, hope and protest: with her antique oven, a "bake" oven.



A truly celebratory Jumper & Goulet, the merrily by the historic bake oven, in October 1998.

## Making the Haus a Home *Furnishing & Equipping*



The "living history" model envisioned by the Restoration Committee and well-known to museum goers presented a special challenge in 1980, as it continues to do to museologists working with historic buildings today. As the name implies, the intent is to make the buildings come alive, to humanize them and the history they preserve. If effectively done, disbelief is suspended and visitors are transported into a fourth dimension in time and place, where generations long departed play out their lives and where time travellers from the present can actively or passively be a part.



*Dad said the Haus reminded him a lot of when he visited his grandparents, a lot of the atmosphere was the same... That stove in the kitchen always makes me think of my grandmother. She had a stove just like that, and she had drying racks. And the floor boards remind me of my grandmother's kitchen. I can just see her standing at the sink.*

Nancy Marie



1911 MARCH 23



Food-prep program in the Schenck House in 1911 with (clockwise from left) Jean Madras, Anna Mann and Annas Pappas

All three of our children were junior interpreters here at Leikvick Hall, and I found it valuable for them in two major levels. One was what they learned. They learned to bake and make sausage and six soups and cook the meat and clear soups. I don't think they did any actual teaching here, but they did a lot of fun practicing.

The other thing that I really valued was, in my, they were involved. They were full members of the interpretation team. They had jobs and responsibilities. I was expecting they would behave as extra workers when they were on and that they wouldn't be goofing off. They were expected to be here to be on time. Our kids learned what they needed to do and had a wonderful time doing it.

Sandy Milan



My daughter Eline wanted to work in the food line in the house. She's been a good job in the strength of her ability to lead me, and she's the only person the house of her generation who hasn't been to work in the past. "When I was young, I was just an innocent I had a lot of fun in Schenck Hall."

Michelle Hill

The Pilsudski's Evening meal in the Schenck House (Photo: Leikvick House)

the rooms that are usually labor-intensive or require distinct expertise. From the moment the first work party was assembled to labor in the district of the house, there have always been willing workers prepared to step into the breach, to help advance a worthwhile goal, to realize a dream. The generous and diligent volunteers that come to us, representing all walks of life, find just virtually all requirements can be met so good as if they are and are provided with the right resource, moment, look fresh for our level and degree of involvement, and each is offered by the welcoming warmth that the house and the generous family create.

Over again, the warmth may be enough, but it is a very real and much of it flows from the emotional reason that in the Schenck House first interpretation family — our mother, dear Anne Marie Bernicke, our aunt, dear Gladys Bernicke, Eline. She does see others who have gone before. Like much of the Schenck family here, she includes a wide circle of volunteer interpreters and "administrative assistants" whom staff were persuaded to assist them with the "everyday" the students of little tasks they occasionally perform at the desk are frequently the face, rather, however, engaging well beyond staffing ourselves, to bringing energy to the entire day staff.



Sally Bernicke's photo of the ladies on the front steps of the Hall was all the inspiration she needed to match the original book for the museum's book. A volunteer, Quilt Block Center, Nancy Jones, Ron Felt, Michelle Spencer and Kathryn Plunkett

Often visitors would think we actually were a family. On the weekend when we had a nice reception, people would say, "Is this your wife?" "Is that really your children?" Or we'd be sitting down for a meal in the Hall, and someone would wave down the person, and say, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm interrupting your dinner!" and that would make us think we were doing a good job making the house feel like a family home.

Cathy Blackburn

I stumbled into working here and discovered that I absolutely loved it. The job is a nice balance between just at the end of the year, when I'm getting sick of both and the whole experience of the school year, I'm so looking forward to summer when it's much more laid back. You can just talk to people and have really intimate conversations, which are so much fun. They want to know what's under your skin? To have standing in the kitchen and this woman come in and said, "Are you girls standing on something or are you really that tall?"

Michelle Spencer



The girls have been in period dress and I said to Susan, "Have any of these girls ever been to a Minnesota home?" and she said, "Probably not." So, along with some of my other geography buddies — this was before the days of the van — we had about eight or ten of the girls out for a little tour of Minnesota country. There was a fascinating gentleman I'd been to see with my sisters over the years. Ever Lander, of Lander Beerworks. He brought out the tools he was working with, and I said, "Hi, Susan, I'd like you to meet all these young ladies who are working at the Leikvick Hall Museum in Leikvick." He really looked at me and said slowly, "That be an awfully big house!"

Carol Cooper

Above: The lunch time was the event for TALL 199. Clockwise: Wedding down with the Bernicke. Office ladies generally "dressed" for the occasion and served contained meal for a lunchtime meal at the Leikvick Hall in July 1988. Left to right are Kathryn Plunkett, Karen Korman, Michelle Spencer, Karen Sheldor, Betty Peckler, Cathy Blackburn, Anne Marie Bernicke, Susan Burke, Elizabeth Thy and Jan Mäkelä.



To memorialize Michael Bird's contribution to the field of Germanic folk art and to the women that, when he died unexpectedly in October 2003, staff reunited from the collectors all the artifacts in the vignette that had been photographed for the cover of *A Splendid Harvest*. Michael and wife Terry are pictured right at a signing for the book in October 2001.

*It was a beautiful collection. To actually get to work with it was fantastic. The cataloging had been started, but I had to complete the measurements and descriptions and provenance, talking with Michael about where it came from, what auction, how he found it and the connection, so the whole story could be told.*

*It was right after the addition had been built, so I was in the storage room with a table set up, working closely with each piece and being able to really look at it. I loved the chests — the drawers were beautiful — and the cupboards, the frames, the chip art, the Yasktus. Beautiful pieces, beautifully made. Michael had an eye. He knew what was important and special, what really should be saved, talked about and celebrated. Putting the book about the Harvest Collection together and having it come here was a major coup.*

Val Harrison



for them. Journalist Hyla Wain Fox, on the other end of the spectrum, considered the Schneider Haus a most worthy repository. "Unlike some major institutions," she wrote, "this museum has made the most effort to reach the public with wonderful displays, exhibitions and courses and does, in fact, do everything to allow researchers to study its collection." Wain Fox was correct; today on-site access to the collections is available on request, online documentation is nearly complete and modified records with images for sections of the collection are searchable on the web.

Once the collection was safely "at home" at the Schneider Haus, the attendant responsibilities its acceptance bore were dramatically apparent. Focus shifted to realizing the expansion of the museum wing that would make good our commitment to the collectors and to our museum audience. A "snail's pace" hardly captures the excruciatingly slow progress the museum's applications made through the federal government's adjudication process at MAP. Specs and drawings were reviewed by expert panels, refined by the architect and re-reviewed by staff finally advancing to the peer review panel. Borgal was still acting on MAP recommendations in March 1986 when the project went to the Region's Finance Committee for approval that year, a full year later than anticipated.

A group calling themselves the Friends of the Schneider Haus appeared as a delegation before the Historic Sites Committee in March. The group introduced themselves as "collectors, volunteers, exhibitors and donors, all having a strong interest in preserving local history and material culture." Reading from a prepared statement, spokesman John Wine explained that though they strongly supported projects being undertaken both at Doon and Schneider Haus, they felt that Schneider Haus was deserving of "special attention and support for its success in achieving major community goals in its school programmes and in its role as museum." They warned that deferring the construction designed to stabilize present

holdings would only "exacerbate the long-term need" and that further delays would jeopardize current government commitments and future funding opportunities. "You are undoubtedly aware that the proposed addition was postponed in 1985 to 1986. We believe this year's postponement to be, in effect, a cancellation... Governments are unlikely to respond as favourably again."

Their appeal was apparently futile; the building addition was cut by the Budget Committee and 12 months later practically to the day, when the project was all but scuppered for the third time, the same group, recorded this time as the Friends of Heritage appeared before the Historic Sites Advisory Committee. This time they were prepared. They had circulated a statement to members of Regional Council expressing their dismay at the latest roadblock and making an offer that would be difficult to refuse. Their appeal was eloquent:

*One year later we are distressed to find that where we had fully expected to see the new addition already open and ready for use, instead the project appears to be in jeopardy. After receiving Council's approval last spring it has since been determined that we will need an additional \$60,000 to go ahead with the project as proposed.*



The spectacular painted copper cabinet attributed to Abraham Lanchau (1799-1879) an eye-catching piece of cabinetry by a master craftsman, is now a focal point of the Schneider Haus. JSH 1964.20.235.1-4





## Spirit of the Haus

*This Place in Time*

Stephanie Kirkwood Walker



*eric, my five-year-old son, said that Schneider Haus is his special museum. I asked him, "Erik, why is the Schneider Haus your special museum?" He said, "Because you're there." So I said, "Yes, but if I weren't there, would it still be your special museum?" And he said, "Yes." "Well, why?" And he said, "Because it's a caring place. There's lots of caring and love at Schneider Haus."*

*It is work, of course, but for so many of us, there is a lot of caring for what we do, and for each other, at the centre of it. Suzan talks about the Schneider Haus family, and for lots of us, it's like that. I've made lifelong friendships here.*

Michelle Spencer

