



# *The Society for the Preservation of* **HISTORIC THORNHILL**

1974-2020: 46 years of giving a future to Thornhill's history

Box 53120, 10 Royal Orchard Blvd., Thornhill, Ont. L3T 7R9

Newsletter

February 2020

## In Honour of Gwyn Wojna, Founder of SPOHT In Memoriam – Gwyneth Afron Wojna, 1923 – 2019

By Kae and Jim Broughton

On the morning of Sunday, November 24, 2019, Gwyneth died peacefully at the Meighan Manor Health Centre in Toronto. Predeceased by Jan, her husband of 41 years, John Andrew, her eldest son, and Timothy Andrew, her first grandchild, she is survived by her children, Elizabeth Mary and Simon Henry, seven grandchildren, sister, Lyn Jones and a nephew and niece.

Born in 1923 in Wrexham, Wales, she was the daughter of Elizabeth Edwards and Henry Jones. During the war, she worked as a nursing assistant, and this was when she met Jan Wojna, a Polish soldier stationed in London. The two married and moved to Canada, finally settling in the historic house at 37 Colborne Street, Thornhill, where Gwyn lived happily for 60 years.

Gwyn lived a full and rich life; she was passionate about gardening, art, music, history, reading and travel. She dabbled in theatre, was active on committees and was a force in her Thornhill neighbourhood. Gwyn's garden was often the site of tours, and she spent many summers creating a floral refuge in her backyard. One of the founding members of the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill and a long-time member of the Thornhill Garden and Horticultural Society, her enthusiasm, dedication and opinions were highly respected. Gwyn travelled throughout the United States studying Early American Art and became a member of its Guild; her beautiful work included painting on glass, stencilling on tin and furniture and creating punched lampshade designs.



*Gwyn Wojna at the 30th Anniversary celebration of SPOHT, February 17, 2004 (Photo by Adam Birell, Thornhill Archives)*

Gwyn spent many years as both a tour guide at Black Creek Pioneer Village and a volunteer at the Gardiner Museum. Both positions made use of her love of history and art and her desire to transfer the traditions of the past to young people.

A woman of deep faith, Gwyn found comfort in her church, religious retreats and

spiritual readings. In spite of suffering many losses in her life, she retained a positive outlook, a keen sense of humour and an inquisitive mind.

Gwyn was buried in Thornhill Community Cemetery on November 30, 2019.

*The above is a revised version of the obituary notice found on the Web at <http://mountpleasantgroup.permavita.com/site/GwynethAfronWojna.html>.*

**From the SPOHT Newsletter,  
February 2014:**

In November, 2013, Gwyn Wojna sold her heritage home at 37 Colborne Street and moved to Amica Retirement Residence in North York; she had lived on Colborne since 1953. Instrumental in the founding of our society in the spring of 1974, she is sorely missed by her neighbours in the Thornhill Heritage District, as well as by our membership at large. In 1994, on the occasion of SPOHT's 20th Anniversary (and Thornhill's 200th), Kae Broughton interviewed Gwyn about the founding of our organization. Kae's article, which follows, appeared on page 2 of the Winter 1994 issue of our Newsletter, under the heading "A Backward Glance".

*In this, the 20th Anniversary year of SPOHT, it is appropriate to look back at our beginnings. An interview was arranged with Gwyn Wojna, who is unquestionably the original moving force behind our organization. As she herself says, it took some time*



## In Honour of Gwyn Wojna, Founder of SPOHT

*Cont'd from pg. 1*

for her to take action, but the incident that disturbed her and led to a fateful phone call was the cutting down of a row of 200-year-old pine trees on the Annswell property on Elgin Street in 1973. In May of 1974, she precipitously telephoned Gibson House in North York; as she puts it – "the spirit moved me." She was referred to Mr. Dalton Mercer, President of the North York Historical Society, who immediately offered to chair a meeting if she could rally some of Thornhill's concerned citizens.

Gwyn spoke to her long-time friend, Margaret Cordingley, who offered to make telephone calls and also to inform customers at her Yonge Street business establishment. Others helped with phoning; Joan Fairfield, of the Colborne Street Library, and Betsy Stow are two who come to mind. To Gwyn's delight and surprise, 26 people (see below) appeared at the meeting, which was held at the Village Library, and an organization was set up. Gwyn readily admits to inexperience in committee work at this time and was so nervous that she forgot to put grounds in the coffee urn. As a result, the group was treated to cups of "perked water" at the close of formalities.

Brig. Gen. Graeme Gibson and Mrs. Gibson (yes, they were the parents of Graeme Gibson, the novelist and essayist) attended, and the former became the first President. The group clearly wanted to "preserve" houses and trees, but did not want to be merely obstructionist, as it recognized that change is inevitable. The Brig. Gen. stated that, while not wishing to be rude to Mr. Mercer, he did not want to see Thornhill's efforts directed to only one house as had occurred in North York (Gibson House) and also did not want genealogy to be a part of the organization's mandate. (It may be noted that Heintzman House and Cricklewood were both in jeopardy at this time.)

Gwyn did not have any desire to direct efforts, as she had family responsibilities; she did represent Thornhill on LACAC for two years, beginning in late 1975, and worked on identifying houses of historic interest in the Thornhill area. She was grateful for the support received from the late Tony Roman,

*Cont'd on page 3*



Alan Sumner



Gwyn Wojna at the Thornhill Village Festival, c1990 (Photo by Alf Weaver)



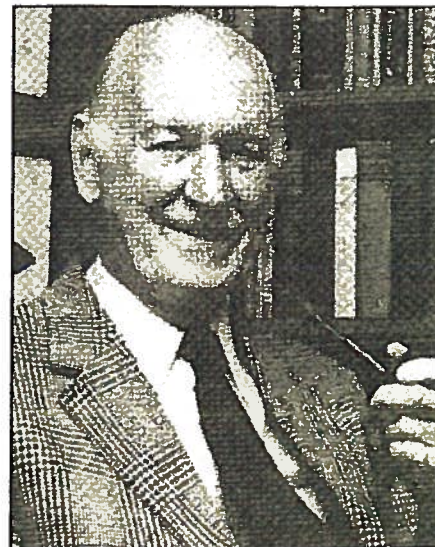
Inset: Margaret Cordingley, 1982 (Photo by Alf Weaver)



Rev. Canon and Mrs. Howden as they climb into a carriage at the 140th anniversary celebration of Holy Trinity Anglican Church, May 10, 1970. (Photo by Alf Weaver)



Philip Whitehead at the Thornhill Village Festival, 1981 (Photo by Alf Weaver)



Brig.-Gen. Graeme Gibson (Thornhill Liberal, June 25, 1975)





*Mrs. Moore Ede, 1978*

when he was Mayor of Markham. For a number of years previously, some of the councillors seemed to be ready to hand over everything developers wanted, but latterly, many Council members have been aware of the need for preservation and have supported SPOHT's efforts.

*So, we should raise a glass at this time to Gwyneth A. Wojna, our founder, who has lived here for 41 years and who cared enough to make that fateful phone call.*

Gwyn was kind enough to provide us with a list of the 26 people who attended the initial meeting in May of 1974:

**Brig.-Gen. Graeme Gibson and Mrs. Gibson** (Brig.-Gen. Gibson was perhaps best known for his command of the Seventh Infantry Brigade which took part in the

**Gerald and Frances Walker** (The Walkers lived at 22 John Street.)

**Margaret Cordingley** (Mrs. Cordingley lived at 23 Colborne Street and operated her interior decorating business, Margaret Cordingley Interiors, in the south corner of the Gallanough building, on the corner of Yonge and Colborne Streets; she died in 2003.)

**Dalton Mercer** (Mr. Mercer was President of the North York Historical Society; he lived in Richmond Hill.)

**John and Nan Burridge** (The Burridges lived at 11 Jane Street; Mrs. Burridge died in 1989, and her husband in 1991.)

**Elizabeth "Betsy" Stow** (Mrs. Stow died in Penetanguishene in 1999.)

**Edith Wedd** (Miss Wedd was a sister of Mrs. Marguerite Grantham; she lived at 26 Colborne Street.)

**Margaret and Elizabeth Govern** (The Govern sisters lived on Deanbank Drive; Elizabeth was a Professor at York University.)

**Margaret Riley** (Mrs. Riley lived at 79 Elgin Street; she died in 2010.)

**Jack and Elizabeth Wharton** (The Whartons lived at 26 Church Lane in the former home of Sir Robert Watson-Watt.)

**Alan and Betty Sumner** (Mr. Sumner was a Trustee of the Police Village of Thornhill in 1952 and from 1954 to 1960. He was also Councillor, Ward 1, Markham for 9 years. The Sumners lived at 7 Sumner Lane [the house was demolished in 1984]. They moved to Guelph, where Alan died in 1983 and Betty in 1989.)

**Rev. Canon H. Reginald Howden and Mrs. Edythe Howden** (Rev. Canon Howden was the Rector of Holy Trinity Anglican Church from 1961 to 1976.)

**Terry Goodwin** (Terry was a former pilot who lived on Thornridge Drive from 1952 to 2005. In the 1970s, he served on Vaughan Town Council for a number of years. He died in 2016.)

**Patrick Trant** (Pat, a respected and influential member of our community, lived on Yonge Street, just north of the Old Presbyterian Church. He spent his last years in Thornbury, where he died in October, 2019.)

**Gwyn Wojna**



*Mr. and Mrs. Terry Goodwin at the Thornhill Village Festival, 1980 (Photo by Alf Weaver)*

liberation of the Netherlands, including the city of Deventer, in 1945. He lived on Deanbank Drive and died at Sunnybrook Hospital, Toronto in 1986.)

**Dr. W. O. Moore Ede and Mrs. Ede** (The Edes bought the former Edey house on the west side of Yonge Street in 1966 and moved it to its present site at 7 Leahill Drive.)

**Frank E. Tucker** (Mr. Tucker was a Trustee of the Police Village of Thornhill in 1954, 1957-59, 1962 and 1963. He purchased the house at 10 Colborne Street in 1948 and lived there until it became the Thornhill Village Library in 1960.)

**Philip B. Whitehead** (Mr. Whitehead moved to 15 Colborne Street in 1958 and was active in SPOHT and on the Thornhill Village Festival Committee for several years; he died in 1997.)



*Patrick Trant at the Thornhill Village Festival, 1978 (Photo by Alf Weaver)*



**Duncan, George**

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**From:** Ontario Heritage Trust | Fiducie du patrimoine ontarien  
<marketing@heritagetrust.on.ca>  
**Sent:** February 05, 2020 10:32 AM  
**To:** Duncan, George  
**Subject:** February news from the Ontario Heritage Trust | Nouvelles du mois de février de la Fiducie du patrimoine ontarien

**CAUTION:** This email originated from a source outside the City of Markham. DO NOT CLICK on any links or attachments, or reply unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

February 2020

## Heritage Matters ... *more!*



Photo courtesy of the County of Simcoe

### **Up front | Beth Hanna, CEO of the Ontario Heritage Trust**

We Ontarians are inextricably tied to the land. The connections are innumerable between the land that sustains us and the many and varied expressions of our cultures. From the creation of portage routes, to the establishment of settlements along waterways, to the resource-rich Canadian Shield, to the immense power of the Great Lakes, our communities have been influenced by the landforms and landscapes of Ontario.

The Trust protects more than 7,300 hectares (18,000 acres) of environmentally sensitive lands for the people of Ontario. These protected lands include sacred places, the habitats of endangered species, rare Carolinian forests, wetlands, sensitive features of the Oak Ridges Moraine, nature reserves on the Canadian Shield, the spectacular Niagara Escarpment, and lands along the Bruce Trail.

We draw life, livelihood and inspiration from our natural environment, are challenged by it, look to it for rest, rejuvenation and recreation. Places like Manitoulin Island, Algonquin Park, the Muskoka Lakes and the Bruce Trail attract residents and tourists alike, and urban dwellers yearn for those experiences. For generations, we have reflected Ontario's nature in our stories, songs, poems, art and traditions.

Over the next several months, the Trust will share stories of these many connections between culture and nature in our communities. We'll look at the stunning diversity of species and spaces that exist in Ontario. And we'll discuss our responsibility to build resilience in our ecosystems and protected areas, and strengthen our conservation practices to protect our natural heritage so that it can continue to sustain its many living forms. I hope that you'll join the discussion.

**Share this newsletter with your friends and colleagues!**



## **Black History Month**



February is Black History Month in Canada – a time to celebrate the achievements of Black Canadians and reflect on the stories, experiences and accomplishments of the country's Black community, past and present.

There's much to commemorate and understand this Black History Month – heroic individuals and achievements associated with the

Underground Railroad, the

deep history of Ontario's Black community, and a legacy of slavery and racism.

Explore the Trust's online resources and visit our event calendar to see how you can engage in celebrating Black history in your community.

Photo: Ian Chrysler

[Explore](#)

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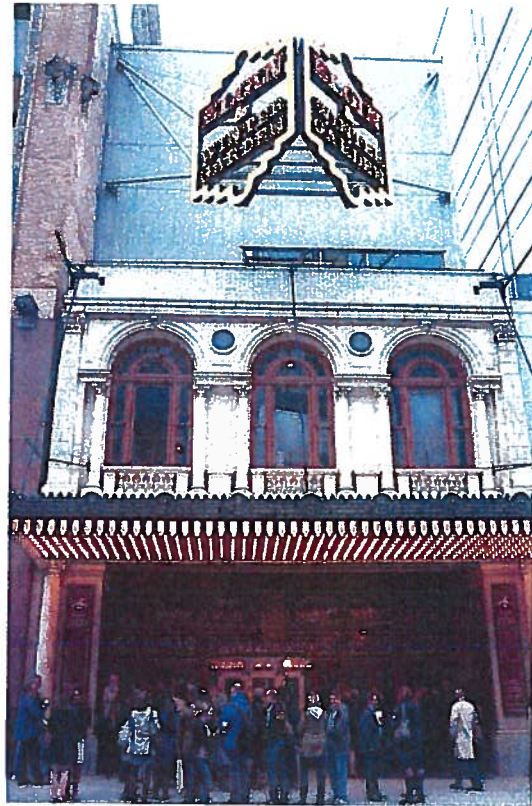
**Celebrating our heritage**



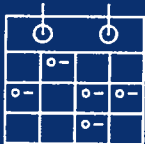
The third week of February gives Ontarians a great reason to connect with their community and province through Heritage Week.

Ontario's Heritage Week is an annual celebration that invites Ontarians to become involved in heritage and heritage conservation by visiting a museum or cultural site, volunteering for a local heritage group, reading a heritage plaque, seeing an artistic performance, nominating a deserving volunteer who has contributed to cultural preservation, enjoying a natural vista while taking a hike, or reading a book by one of Ontario's many talented authors.

To help you plan your Heritage Week activities, the Trust has a calendar of community events that are happening across the province. We will also be sharing ideas through our social media channels. We hope that you'll take this opportunity to celebrate local culture and traditions. Happy Heritage Week!



Community events calendar



**Explore our calendar of events. There's always a lot to see and do throughout Ontario!**



The Gallery at the Ontario Heritage Centre, Toronto (Photo: Bofei Cao)

## Make your next event spectacular!

Our distinctive heritage venues provide everything that you expect in first-class facilities: beautiful and elegant heritage spaces, convenient locations and great food.

Our experienced team is here to help organize all of the important details for your event or meeting, combining modern amenities and affordable rates to meet your needs. Every effort will be made to accommodate last-minute bookings and special requests.

Choose from one of two unique Toronto venues: the Ontario Heritage Centre or the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse. Each location offers a variety of room arrangements to suit any occasion.

### Heritage Venues

- Or are you interested in holding an event at Brockville's [\*\*Fulford Place?\*\*](#)
- Maybe the [\*\*Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre\*\*](#) is the place for you.



### Did you know?

In 1985, The Honourable Lincoln Alexander (1922-2012) became the first Black Canadian to be appointed as a Lieutenant Governor (in 1985). Alexander also served as Chair of the Trust's [\*\*Board of directors\*\*](#) from 2004 to 2010.

Photo courtesy of Gilbert & Associates, Toronto

**This Heritage Week, won't you consider making a donation? The Trust raises more than 65% of its funding. Join us in protecting Ontario's heritage.**

Give today

The Ontario Heritage Trust envisions an Ontario where the places, landscapes, traditions and stories that embody our heritage are reflected, valued and conserved for future generations.



Février 2020