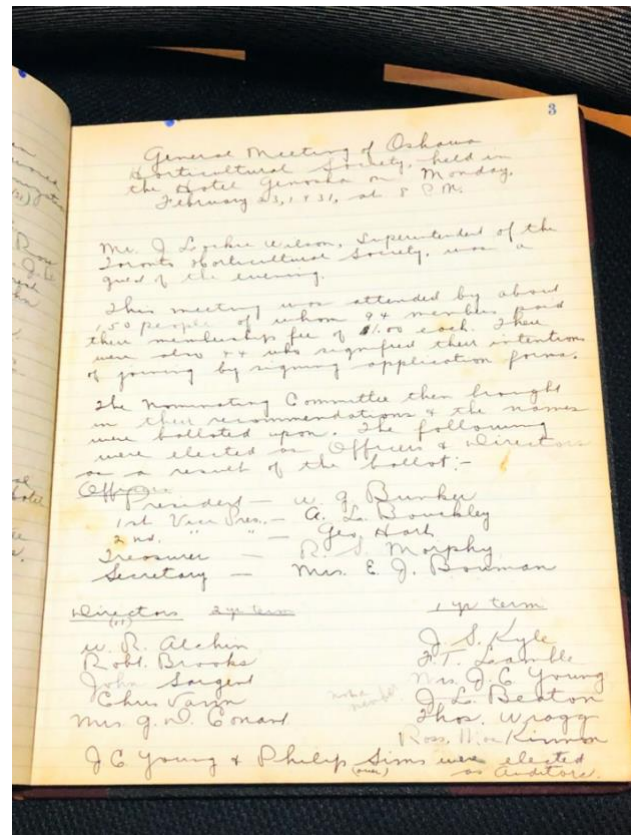
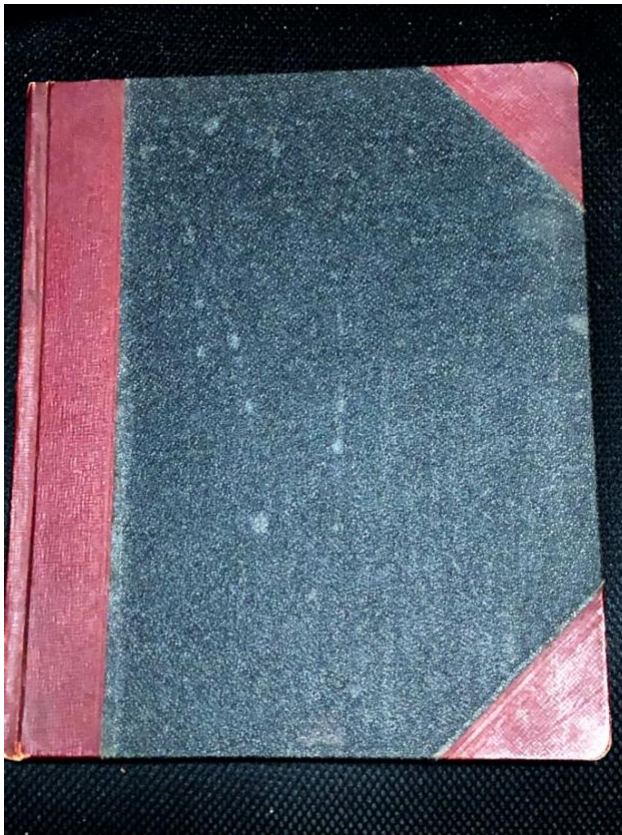


# Oshawa Horticultural Society



## The First Decade ..... The Dirty Thirties

90 years ago, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 1931, the **Oshawa Horticultural Society** took root and this time it flourished. This is the first installment on the history of our club and how things have changed, and not changed, over the years.

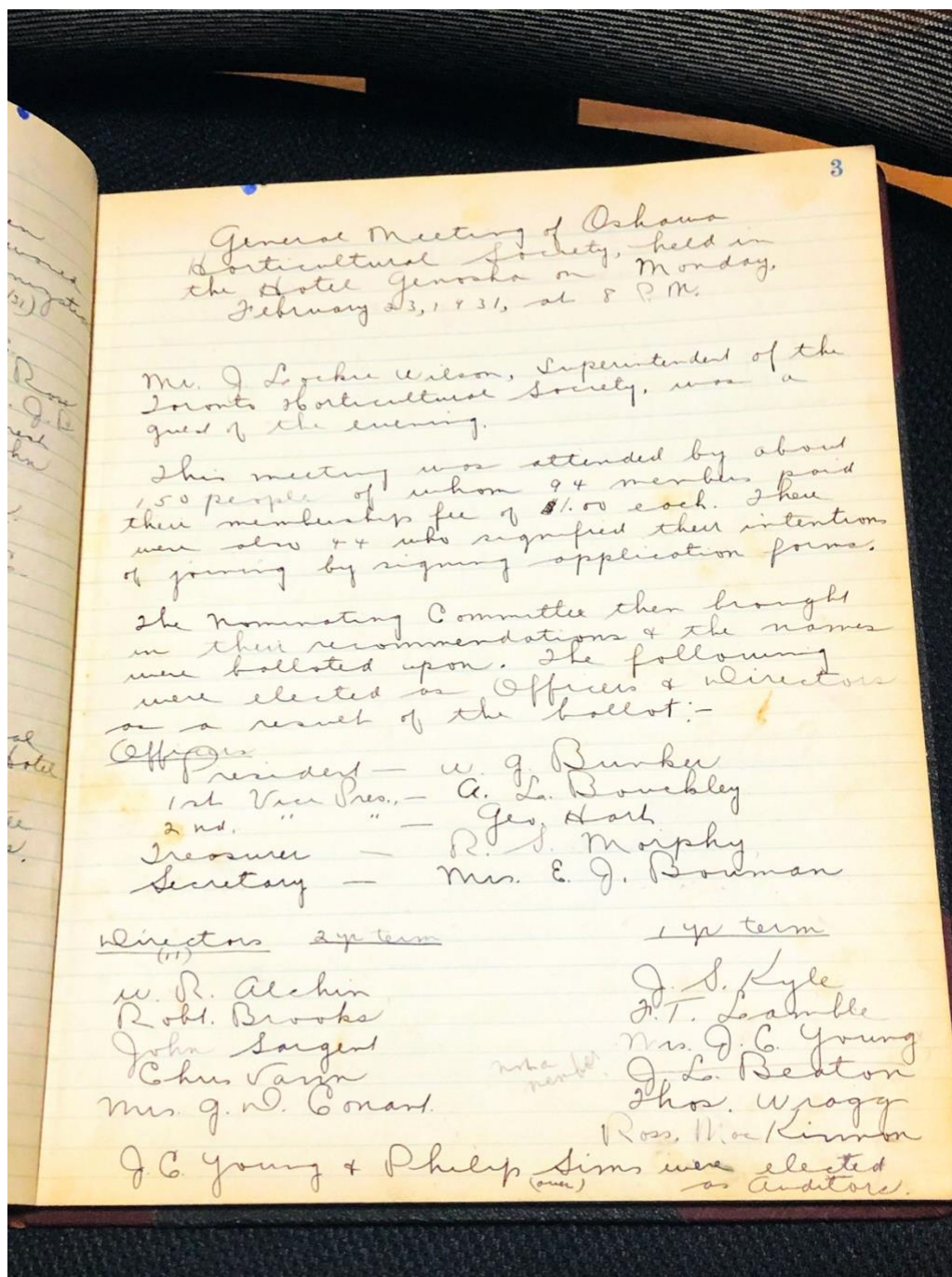


The early focus was on Civic Awards for the best gardens and horticultural displays.

First, let's look in more detail at how things got started, how things looked then, and how that was different from how things are today for the Oshawa Garden Club.

# Year One – 1931

First Membership Meeting – February 23, 1931



The first meeting of the Oshawa Horticultural Society took place in the largest building in downtown Oshawa, the Hotel Genosha. About 150 people met under the direction of the Superintendent of the Toronto Horticultural Society to elect the first board of directors. 94 of those present also paid



\$1.00 to become members of this new Society. That is equivalent to just over \$17 today. So, by comparison, our membership rate has only gone up about 14% in 80 years. That is a pretty good deal, I think.

Elected to office of this new Horticultural Society were the following: President, W. G. Bunker, 1<sup>st</sup> VP, A. L. Bouckley, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, Geo Hart, Treasurer, R. S. Morphy, and Secretary, Mrs. E. J. Bowman (Helen).

It is interesting to note that Mr. Bunker came from a very successful farming family who had a large property at the NE corner of Harmony and King. George Bunker was the head of finance for the Board of Education and served as a City Alderman during that period. Mr. Bouckley was the father of Thomas Bouckley, who is a noted historian and the person who created four-volume collection of historic photos of Oshawa. Geo Hart would likely have been from the Hart Dairy family. Mr. Morphy was a successful Oshawa lawyer and Helen Bowman rounded out the team as the only female on the Executive and in the traditional role, at the time, of Secretary. She lived at Ritson and Bond in the home that has been the Grey House store in recent years.

It is evident from the names here and as directors, that the OHS was established by very prominent and well-to-do members of Oshawa society. Verna Conant, who is on the list of directors, was the wife of G. W. Conant who became Ontario's Attorney General, and she later went on to help found the Oshawa Historical Society. She was also the daughter of E. D. Smith who was very prominent as a producer of jams and other confections in the Niagara area.

Gardening, at the time, was a favourite pastime of the well-to-do and bigger was often seen as better. At that time, the Parkwood Estate of Samuel McLaughlin, General Motors of Canada, set the standard for grand gardens in the area, and is now a focal point, once again for the now Oshawa Garden Club, as we help them to revisit some of that early gardening history that was very grand and formal.

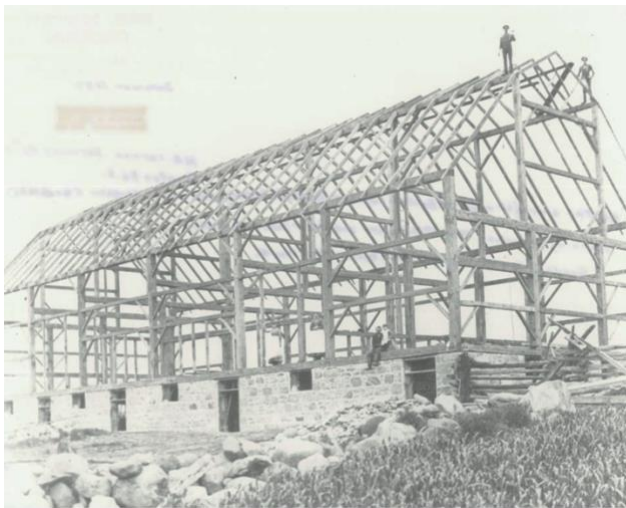
The focus of the Society in the early years was on encouraging civic pride and a high level of horticultural achievement and perfection. That is reflected in the early adoption of floral and garden judging, the awarding of very large trophies and cash prizes. Recognition was also given to youth groups such as scouting, as well as schools and local businesses such as Service Stations and civic displays. The Society was also involved in the floral decorations of the city's war memorial.





This is a photo of the Board of Education from 1936. W. G. Bunker is the tall gentleman in the back row and first President of the Oshawa Horticultural Society.

Photos are from the Thomas Bouckley Collection at the RMG, Oshawa.



This barn was erected by the Bunker family with the help of neighbours at the north-east corner of Harmony and Taunton Roads (Township of East Whitby) in 1889. The original barn was burned to the ground the year before as a result of a threshing accident. The farm on which the barn was built was purchased by W. H. Bunker prior to Confederation (1867). Logs and timber for the barn were from a woodlot on the south-west corner of Solina and Taunton Roads. The logs, timber, and lumber for the barn were sawn in a local sawmill. The frame as seen in the picture was erected by local neighbours and carpenters at a "raising bee".

**Gardens in Early Oshawa**  
Follow this link to the  
Robert McLaughlin Gallery's  
Virtual Exhibit

**Oshawa in Bloom**



Early minutes make reference to a Committee to maintain the gardens and floral displays at the Cenotaph in Memorial Park.