

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

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Newsletter

December 2021

## Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

# CHAPTERS OF THE OAKS HOTEL

A FIRE AND RECOVERY – THE FINAL OF THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT FROM THE RECORDS BY SUSAN DAVIS

THE OAKS SANATORIUM HOTEL Chapter 4: A Fire!

On the 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1939, a disaster struck the hotel when a fierce blaze broke out on the second floor, just after midnight. Guests and staff had to quickly vacate the building dressed only in pyjamas and dressing gowns. It was a devastating blow as the hotel had recently been renovated. Mrs Ida Croll was the licensee and it was her niece who raised the alarm when she heard broken glass in the direction of the tower. The top floor was quickly destroyed. Some furniture and fittings were saved from the ground floor. Camden fire brigade arrived to fight the fire that lasted for two hours. Most lost all their possessions. The billiard room was the only portion of the building saved and in true Aussie

style beer was served from there during the day from the surviving ice chest in the room.

It is a shame the Tooth and Co agent decided to scribble over picture of the hotel in 1939 to show it had been destroyed by fire. Looking beyond the scribble, the photograph shows a majestic structure with ornate verandah, mirror pictures on the outside wall. The billiard room that was less damaged is on the right of the main building.

The writing indicates that the hotel was planned to be rebuilt and opened by November 1939. *Continued page 4....*

HOTEL	LOCALITY	TRADE	OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING TRADE		
AREA OF HOTEL LAND	TYP. OF DISTRICT	HOUSE TRADE	POPULATION	YEAR	MUNICIP. DISTRICT
NO. OF STOREYS 2		PUBLIC BAR			
STRUCTURE <i>Brick cement frame</i>		SALOON BAR			
NO. OF ROOMS <i>12 bed rooms</i>	NEAREST HOTEL DISTANCE	BOTTLE DEPT.			
FURNITURE <i>June 1939 Valued (2000/1000)</i>	NO. OF HOTELS WITHIN QUARTER MILE RADIUS				
BAR MEASUREMENT					
U.C.V.					
L.C.V. <i>to be left but to be light!</i>					
A.A.V.					
PROPERTY ADJOINING					
<i>late years in hotel property leased to hotel owner @ 1/10</i>					
OWNER <i>Hennessey (Deceased)</i>	<i>Totally destroyed by fire</i> <i>6/1/39</i> <i>New bldg will be compl. Nov 1939</i> <i>shed and appts 5000/000 abt 30' bar - 3' on lounge - Total cost abt 10000. Archt C. J. Mack</i> <i>10/59</i>				
EXORS <i>MARY T. MOORE, JAMES REEDY, SYDNEY L. MOORE.</i>	<i>Beleaved: MRS. C. C. MOORE, MRS. S. W. HULLER, B. HENNESSY, L. HENNESSY</i>				



# President's Report

Trish Hill

As we reach December we have planned to reopen on Saturday & Sunday 18/19th December and from January 1st 2022. I am putting together a volunteer roster for the coming year and trust it is suitable for all volunteers, watch your mailbox. Work is continuing on both the Burragorang and Indigenous exhibitions with painting now almost complete. Cabinets are being restructured with display objects and artwork and design underway. Kazan Brown has been advising and assisting Doreen with incorporating the Gundungurra Creation Story artwork into a display format for the exhibition.

Thanks to our executive team for their support, the great team in the kitchen who produce amazing things and to all of our volunteers for their dedication, support and hard work throughout the year.

We have had an amazing effort this year with our bottle/can recycling effort and raised close to \$800 for the

museum. Thanks Kevin for leading this project. Thanks to another wonderful member Lynne Greenwood for her very generous donation recently which we will put to good use. Without meetings and in lockdown it has been difficult at times to compile an interesting newsletter so my thanks to our member Marie Larnach (also previous newsletter editor) for the contribution of articles this year. Our many thanks to Angus Taylor for his support with the funding of solar panels which will be installed this week and for Volunteer Grants Program funding for some much needed tools and equipment to make the job of our volunteers easier.

We are looking forward to reopening to visitors and group bookings and a much better 2022. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year ■



# Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

I hope you have enjoyed reading about *Chapters of The Oaks Hotel!* It is time now to get back to your Family History! As you hopefully gather around with family this year and discuss your ancestors I thought you might like

these useful resources to direct your thinking!

Happy Christmas from Sue Davis and the research team ■



### Ancestral Mathematics

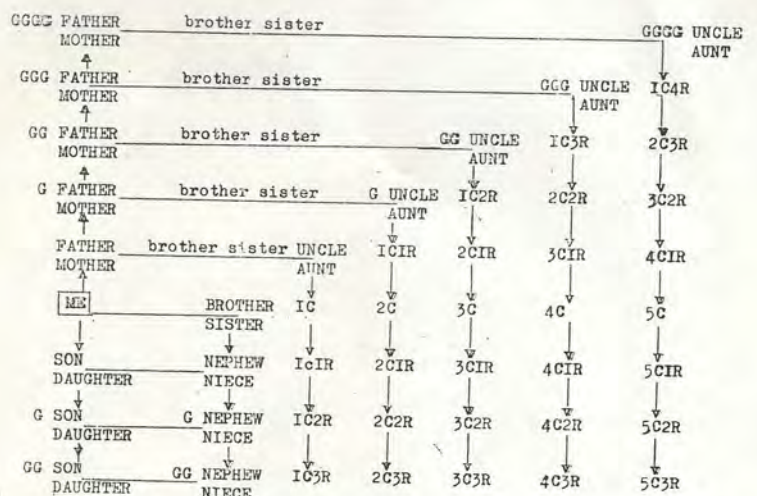
In order to be born you need:

- 2 parents
- 4 grandparents
- 8 great-grandparents
- 16 second great-grandparents
- 32 third great grand-parents
- 64 fourth great-grandparents
- 128 fifth great-grandparents
- 256 sixth great-grandparents
- 512 seventh great-grandparents
- 1,024 eighth great-grandparents
- 2,048 ninth great-grandparents

For you to be born today from 12 previous generations you need a total of 4,094 ancestors over the last 400 years.

Think for a moment– How many struggles? How many battles? How many difficulties? How much sadness? How much happiness? How many love stories? How many expressions of hope for the future?-did your ancestors have to undergo for you to exist in this present moment?

### COUSIN CHART



G - COUSIN R- REMOVED G - GRANDFATHER GG -GREAT GRANDFATHER

A direct ancestor is any person from whom you are descended for example your mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, great grand parents and so on. A collateral relative, on the other hand is a brother or sister of a direct ancestor; for example your mother and father's brother and sisters, your great grandfather's brothers and sisters and their descendants. Their descendants are termed cousins and each can be reckoned in degrees of cousinship not always easy to work out and are best illustrated by a table. Just start at "ME" and count the generations back to a common ancestor. Then count the generations down again to your long-lost cousin.



# Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

## SOME JOHN E MOORE PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS FROM ITEM 16/57 IN OUR COLLECTION

While John E Moore inherited a lot of property from his father, he was also involved in a lot of property transactions, purchases, sales, leases. The Vanderville estate sale in 1894 has already been dealt with. In May 1894 he purchased Harry Mitchell's 200 acre selection. It is not recorded where it was or the price. In June 1895 he purchased Charles Dunn's interest and title to the unsold lots in the Vanderville estate. In 1898 he purchased from John Mitchell 300 acres at £150 per acre. Mitchell moved to Lismore and took his horses and cattle with him. Mitchell sent a letter to John after he got to Lismore and this letter is preserved. In it Mitchell states that they arrived on the last day of June and had good feed all the way and that in three months there have only been three weeks of fine weather. John E also took up the balance of the land, 290 acres at £45 per acre, giving a total of 590 acres, 150 of which was under conditional purchase and 440 under conditional lease.

In 1902 he purchased from E. G. Barker, Chants? Wanganderry selection for £900. In May 1902 he purchased 150 acres for £500 at Douglas Creek from Frank Reid. May 1903 he brought Beu Larkin's selection of 662 acres. Also in May he purchased from his father's estate 210 acres at 'The Ditch' for £3 per acre and a further 140 acres at £3 per acre. August 1903 saw him acquire William Sant's 560 acre selection at Cox's River for £325. August 1905 saw the purchase of lots 13 & 14, section 13, 6 acres at Camden from Camden Park Estate.

May 1906 saw him purchase a 1/18<sup>th</sup> share of the Billet & Seaton mine at Yerranderie plus 40 acres from John Skaffe for £28/15-

1907 saw him have a number of dealings with Henry Willis, which resulted in 119 acres at Douglas Creek for £389/ 9/10 and 30 acres for £75. He also brought 37.5 acres for £103/2/6 and 34 acres for £85. Later in the year he picked up another 120 acres for £360 at Burnt Flat. From his father's estate in 1907 he purchased a further 120 acres at Burnt Flat for £360. At Tinkettle Creek he purchased 74 acres from his father's estate and from Robert Moore he purchased another 165 acres. He rounded the year off by purchasing William Brawley's shop and premises in Camden for £1400.

Undated purchases include 40 acres at Burnt Flat from the crown which was Peter Sheriff's selection. Another purchase from the crown was 56 acres at Tin Kettle Creek. He made a number of purchases from a J. Dobson at Nattai and these were: 100 acres "Cherry Tree", 50 acres "The Caps", 82 acres Douglas paddock and a total of 400 acres on Paddys Peak Creek Top Paddock. From Henry Maxwell he purchased 261 acres for £400 at Upper Burragorang.

Not many sales have been recorded, but in May 1903 he sold M. Feld 32 acres, Galvins Creek at Toonalli River. In October 1903 he sold William Littlewood a cottage at The Oaks he had brought from Peter Schmarr.

John E also leased 200 acres at 'The Ditch' from his father's estate in 1898, and in 1894 he leased William Sutton's paddock for 12 months.

In April 1895 he sold Robert Ditton 8 working bullocks and tackle for £21. In January 1906 he sold Michael Byrne from Yerranderie a team of bullocks and wagon for £94.

I'm sure there were many other transactions that we haven't any record of, so it can be seen that he was a very busy person, and must have been very difficult keeping track of it all. I haven't added up the total acreage but it is obviously very extensive ■

The following article which perhaps features some of these Moore properties mentioned is from Trove/Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser ,Wednesday 6 May 1903.

**Stock, Properties, Auctions, &c.**

**GREAT CLEARING SALE OF VALUABLE**

**Picton and Burragorang Properties.**

In the Estate of the late E. L. MOORE.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1903,**

At the George Inn, Picton, at 12 noon.

**HILL, CLARK, and CO.,** in conjunction with **ADOLPHUS GRAHAM,** Picton, are instructed by the Trustees of the Estate of the late **E. L. MOORE** to sell by Public Auction as above all those Valuable Properties acquired by the late **E. L. Moore** in the Picton and Burragorang districts as follow :—

**LOT 1.—690 Acres Freehold, known as Mitchell's Farm,** being portion of Craigend Estate, situated on Picton-road, near The Oaks. This is a beautiful property, well situated for dairying and agriculture. It is well improved, fenced and subdivided into several paddocks; a Dwelling-house, with stables, yards, &c. Title, Real Property Act.

**LOT 2.—HARE'S FARM.** 440 Acres Freehold, being portions 5, 6, 7, 8, 34 on Wollondilly River, Burragorang Valley, Picton. Mostly river flats. This is a splendid farm, fenced and subdivided, has a comfortable Cottage, stables and yards, &c.

**LOT 3.—MULHOLLAND'S FARM.** 320 Acres Freehold, being portions 31, 32, Parish Jooriland, 22, 23, 62, Parish The Oaks, on Jooriland Creek, Burragorang Valley, Picton. Mostly river flats. Stock yards.

**LOT 4.—THE DITCH FARM.** 250 Acres Freehold, being portions 101, 111, 112, 113, 125, Parish Nattai, County Camden, and portion 40, Parish Jooriland, on Wollondilly River, Burragorang Valley, Picton. Fenced and yards.

**LOT 5.—NOLAN'S FARM.** 195 acres 3rds. Freehold, portions 10, 11, Parish Jooriland, 13, 14, 21, Parish The Peaks, 34, 35, 36, 102, Parish Nattai, on Jooriland Creek, Wollondilly River, Burragorang Valley, Picton. Fenced and subdivided; House, stables and yards, &c. This property has a big frontage to the Wollondilly River, and is principally river flats.

**LOT 6.—DOBSON'S FARM.** 120 Acres Freehold, portions 52, 53, Parish Wanganderry, on Bonnum Pio Creek, Burragorang Valley, Picton. This property is well watered and fenced.

All these properties, with the exception of No. 1 are grants from the Crown.

## CHAPTERS OF THE OAKS HOTEL *Continued from page 1*



The old and new building of the main part of the hotel. ←The left is taken in 1930s and shows Bill Moore standing on the road side. The picture on the right is → taken from a similar position in the 1940s and shows how the roadside fence and post had survived the fire.



The newly built hotel as pictured in 1941. The footprint of the building was similar to the destroyed building but the external look was very different.



### Chapter 5: Moving On

In 1949 the external look of the hotel had not changed (see right) The lighting was connected to town electricity; water was from tanks and toilets were pan style.

In 1955 Tooth and Co. helped the hotel install a new cool room with various fittings.

When Mary Moore died in 1958, the hotel was managed by the third generation of Hennessy's with Cecil (information from the headstone) Anita Smith being the licensee. This third generation listed as owners were Eugene Hennessy, Sylvia Wheeler, Kirkham Edward Hennessy and Cecil Anita Smith. Edward and Eugene were living at Mosman and Bondi. The family continued to be involved for many years after.

Licenses in the 1960s and 70s were: Bede Quig 1964-1970; Hamilton Irwin, from 2/2/1970; Ronald Banham from 1/3/1971; Karl Richardson from 16/5/1975; and Alan McCarthy 29/7/1977.



*Continued page 5...*

## CHAPTERS OF THE OAKS HOTEL *Continued from page 4...*



From the 1950s to 2021 there has been a constant...the tree! If trees could talk there would be many stories this one could tell! They might include the time a robbery took place using the tree as a ladder to gain access to the top floor! Other stories might be about the SP Bookie or the Ferret Races! Perhaps a story remembered might be when the young man was overstaying and his wife sent his clothes up as he wasn't welcome back home ■ There will be many stories, some fact and some fiction as life goes on for The Oaks Hotel.



↑ Pictured above from left - May, Mrs Williams, Mrs Hennessy, Miss O'Hare, Sylvia, Della Nurse? & Eugene.

← back Michael Hennessy, Minnie (Mrs Hennessy), Bede and May. Front—Kickham, Eugene & Sylvia Hennessy.



### Postscript

As we went to print today we had a phone call from the Central Coast from Evol Wheeler who is the daughter-in-law of Sylvia Wheeler. During a group booking last week and a chance conversation about the hotel story I mentioned we had no photos of Michael Hennessy and asked whether the family may have some. Amazingly, this morning Evol has driven from the Central Coast to ensure these photos could be included in the final *Chapters of The Oaks Hotel* story. Our thanks to Evol and her family for the prompt response to our conversation that has completed the story and added a valuable resource to our photo collection. Thank you Evol!

Ed.

This dissertation of 5 Chapters provided an overview of the history of The Oaks Hotel that has been the centre of the village of The Oaks, in New South Wales, for over 120 years. It has been physically at the centre and also, for many, the centre of the social community. Research for this overview comes from a lengthy research task involving: National Archives; Butlin Archives of the Australian National University; NSW State Archives; resources at Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum; and digitised newspapers found on Trove, National Library of Australia.

# The Burragorang Valley described...an extract

## from 'The Aboriginal People of the Burragorang Valley' by Jim Smith

In common non-Aboriginal usage, the area of fertile river flats, surrounded by imposing cliff lines, along the lower Wollondilly and Cox Rivers were collectively known as The Burragorang Valley. The source of the Wollondilly River is south of Goulburn and the source of the Cox River is well to the west of Lithgow. The group of Gundungurra-speaking clans who lived along the northern part of the Wollondilly and eastern section of the Cox described their country in the Creation story of Gurangatch (a type of 'Rainbow Serpent') and Mirragan (a Quoll). The journey of these two protagonists began at the Wingecarribee River junction with the Wollondilly and left the Cox River at its junction with the Jenolan River.

The Wingecarribee and Nattai Rivers join the Wollondilly from the east, where they drain the adjacent Southern Highlands. From the Wingecarribee junction, the Wollondilly makes a major deviation to the west, because, as the Gundungurra had explained in their story, Gurrangatch found it too difficult to burrow through the hard rocks in a straight line. After the junctions of Jocks, Tomat and Murruin Creeks, the Wollondilly swings back eastwards and flows below the Wanganderry Tableland, whose cliffs provide the vertical backdrop to the typical scenery that people associate with the Burragorang Valley.

After the Jooriland, Byrnes and Tonalli Rivers join the Wollondilly from the west, the Valley narrows, as the Tonalli Tableland on the west comes close to the Burragorang Tableland on the east. Lacy's Creek is the last significant tributary of the Wollondilly River before it joins the Cox River. Green Wattle and Black Hollow Creeks



and the Kowmung, Kanangra and Jenolan Rivers draining from the Great Dividing Range, augment the Cox from the South. The Kedumba and Cedar Creeks coming into the Cox from the north are more reliable water sources than the tributaries from the south as they are fed by the 'hanging swamps' above the Jamison Valley. As well as the major rivers and creeks mentioned, there are hundreds of minor tributaries. Combined together, the catchment areas of all these tributaries of the Wollondilly and Cox Rivers extend over a huge area. It was because of this vast drainage area of the Burragorang Valley that it was eventually doomed to become the catchment area for Sydney's water supply.

### Geology and Topography

The patterns of both pre and post-contact settlement, travel and resource use were strongly influenced by the diverse

geology, land forms and soil types of Gundungurra country that determined animal and plant distribution and the locations of water and food resources in and around Burragorang Valley. The distribution of these resources and topographic features was explained by the Gundungurra Creation stories. Travel between these resources had to be well planned so that food and water supplies were not too far apart. For example the steep, barren and sometimes dangerous quartzite ridges connecting the Kowmung River to the Gingra Track and Kiaramba Range offered little food and water and were traversed quickly. The Kiaramba (Scott's Main Range) ridge separating the catchments of Butchers (Billagoola) Creek and the Kowmung River was poor in resources but easy to travel along quickly. It was a Gundungurra 'highway'. I have found that where the main Kiaramba Ridge intersects with easily negotiable passes to the rivers below, there is usually evidence of campsites.

The main rivers of the Burragorang Valley varied considerably in the ease of travelling along them and the resources available. The river flats beside the Wollondilly were very easy to move along and close to rich food resources. The Kowmung and Warragamba Rivers are difficult to follow and

relatively lacking in plant and animal foods. The Cox River was somewhere in between these extremes with sections of open river flats alternating with narrow sections. The intersections of rivers and creek were often regularly flooded and had richer soil on the adjacent flats. These flats could have locally significant plant foods such as at the junction of Kedumba Creek and the Cox where the *gadu* ferns with edible

roots, grew. Alternatively, these flats could have been regularly burned to provide grazing for macropods. Contrary to what many people think, Aboriginal people did not camp on these river flats. I have often found Gundungurra camp sites on small level areas well above the rivers. From here they would observe the grazing animals below and only go down to hunt. These spots also have a warmer microclimate than either the rivers or the ridge tops ■

The publication is available at The Heritage Centre and my thanks to Jim Smith .

↑Pictured portion 28A Parish of Bimlow— "It was set aside when the area was first surveyed and used when driving herds of cattle from the Kowmung to the saleyards. I think the only timber that had been felled on this portion was for the purpose of fencing it. To me this was one of a very few that illustrated what the river flats could have looked like when first settlers arrived in the Valley"—Mel Catt to Jim Smith 4/11/2007



## Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

What an interesting year 2021 proved to be! Once again we set out with our year heavily booked and once again our program came to an abrupt halt!

Between February and June we operated for 12 weeks, including having a new school, Condell Park Christian School. Macquarie Fields had 2 of those weeks and had another 2 booked before COVID hit again and we locked down.

The groups from Macquarie Fields were extremely large so Julie Littler, one of our volunteers, came up with an activity related to the blacksmith shop, so that we could have 7 groups, thus spreading the numbers and being more COVID safe.

Julie is an experienced blacksmith who obtained 4 welding certificates

and a heavy metal fabrication certificate from Ultimo TAFE. In her session with the children she explained to them that tool making was vital for farming, building, stone masonry and wagon making. She showed them many useful and decorative things that could be made by heating and shaping metal. The students used a sharpening stone and bellows, held a horse shoe with tongs and hit with a hammer and anvil, supervised by her son Dean. Thank you Julie, it was a great addition to our program and very necessary at that time.

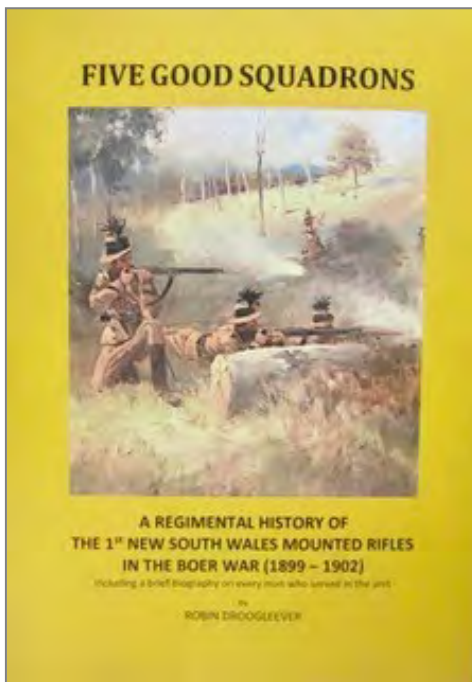
From the end of June until now we have had to cancel 12 weeks of schools and would probably have had more booked by now. Oh well we will have to see what 2022 brings ■

# FIVE GOOD SQUADRONS

**A Regimental History of the 1st New South Wales Mounted Rifles in the Boer War and co-  
vers men from The Oaks and District** by Robin Droogleever

The Oaks Historical Soc. Inc. are pleased to see the publication of this book for which we have been able to provide support through our research facilities. Rob contacted us at various times between 2015 and 2018 and visited on a couple of occasions. We were able to supply information on Boer War soldiers who enlisted from Burragorang, Glenmore, Thirlmere, Wilton, Picton and Bargo. We look forward to reading about them in print!

**The Five Squadrons** that constituted the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles which joined the British campaign in South Africa in 1900 were initially a mix of trained militiamen, supplemented two months later by volunteers who were prepared to 'give it a go'. Accepted on the basis of whether they were healthy and could ride and shoot, they were made up of professional soldiers, farmers, landowners, labourers, students, teachers, policemen, gentlemen of leisure, railway and tram workers, unemployed men, and those who had crossed the law. Over 600 served. More than 50 never came home. The regiment played a significant role in the course of the campaign and were described by one British Commander as *'The finest mounted infantry material in the world'*. Their reputation in the Boer War had an impact on the development of the Light Horse



Brigades that went on to serve

Australia so well in the First World War.

The book covers not only the campaign history of the regiment but there are 185 pages of biographies of all the men who served. There are also 150 pages of photos, most of which have been generously donated by descendants, and which provide a wonderful panorama of social life at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Now the cost: \$60 plus postage of \$12.50 in the Australia Post medium sized red bag which is waterproof and can be tracked. Total: \$72.50. Not only do Australia Post seem to

give priority to their red bags it is definitely the most secure way of despatch.

Payment can be through Direct credit to my bank account which I will provide upon requests for the book. An alternative form of payment is in the form of a cheque made out to Robin Droogleever and sent to PO Box 42, Bulleen, 3105, Victoria.

Contact: Robin Droogleever on email at [jerwfd@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jerwfd@optusnet.com.au) or phone on mobile 0455-346-777 (or feel free to use the P.O.Box number) ■

**MONTHLY MEETINGS:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, 43 Edward St. The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. Due to Covid restrictions and lockdown our meetings are currently suspended. Our patron is Judith Hannan. The Oaks Historical Society Inc. takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the articles, papers or reviews that appear in this newsletter. The statements made or opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Oaks Historical Society Inc. Copies of the minutes are available.



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