

## ***AUCHMAR ADVOCATE***

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## ***BEYOND THE FRONT DOOR***

### **Inside The Auchmar Manor House: The War Years**

**1943. FRANCIS AND EDITH FARWELL**, spent the summer in Beaumaris on Lake Muskoka. Many visits were enjoyed with the Young and Greening families. A. V. Young was impressed with how the Farwell family worked last summer with the R.C.A.F. to create a convalescent hospital for injured airmen. Many within Francis Farwell's social and business circles were involved with the war in various capacities.

In August, the Young family leased Auchmar to the R.C.A.F. which would become R.C.A.F. Convalescent Hospital No.2, Young Division, for the duration of the war. Wynnstay Estate, the Dalley family home in Ancaster, was leased also to the R.C.A.F. and became part of R.C.A.F. No. 2.

The Young family enjoyed the remaining summer days in Beaumaris. Upon their return, the family took up residence at Edgecliffe, one of their properties.

**ON OCTOBER 9, 1943, THE FIRST SEVEN AIRMEN** and staff transferred from Beaumaris to Auchmar. Among the airmen were Warrant Officer Dan Taylor, and Warrant Officer Bill Carrey. The staff included Flight Lieutenant P.A. Voelker, M.D., Nursing Sister Hazel Hughes, a specialist in burn treatment, and Corporal Alice Vousden, who happened to be the mens' favourite cook. Corporal Perkins was also assigned to Auchmar. Squadron Commander Len Dunham would be the Commanding Officer.

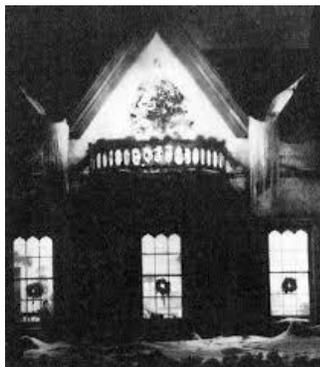
After settling into their quarters, it was time to get on developing the physical exercises, individuals' therapies, and adding leisure activities.

The conventional wisdom prior to WWII was that convalescence was focused upon bed rest. Certainly, the airmen required rest. Dr. Voelker was aware that each man in his own way, needed to be challenged and not only challenged through the tiresome drudgery of daily exercises such as calisthenics, but, the painful stretching and exercising of burned fingers and hands to maintain mobility.



Dr. Voelker, in a prescient moment, documented on film throughout 1943-1944, the life of the airmen to educate others across the Dominion about the effectiveness of these individual therapies. There are images of men with badly burned hands stretching and flexing, dipping their hands into a wax bath and toning their muscles.

There were chores to be done which strengthened both body and mind. The airmen cut down dead trees and piled up wood to feed the fireplaces of Auchmar. They jogged on the grounds. They competed for the best score on a nine hole golf course which was on the grounds. Overall, they spent two Christmases together. Dr. Voelker put a Christmas tree complete with lights on the second floor balcony at least once, maybe twice.



The men created an in house newsletter, The Auchmar Tonic. The issue dated April 29, 1944, describes how they built and planted a Victory Garden. Images survived of the airmen bowling, curling, cycling and cross country skiing. The men made use of the extensive collection of books in the library at Auchmar. They would listen to classical music on the record player while relaxing (possibly remarking on how fortunate they were). Smoking was permitted. Drinking alcohol was not.



Photographs have survived from this time. Like all photographs, some found frames and stories were told about them while other were placed in luggage trunks, hat boxes and shoe boxes. All that survived are family heirlooms.

Life at Auchmar was not just the day in day out routines. The people of Hamilton visited. Photographs long forgotten about, show the airmen receiving haircuts from Ralph the Barber (last name unknown) at Auchmar.

Saturday evening dances were held. The airmen enjoyed the Joe Charles Band and the music of the day. June Cooper, who was a teenager at the time, would visit on dance nights. Perhaps she danced with the men but she took the time to help them write letters home to family.

June 6, 1944 witnessed the Allied Invasion of Normandy. At home, the airmen continued to recover.

By September 1945, with the war over, the R.C.A.F. started to close up the convalescent hospitals, repair the buildings to a certain degree, and transfer the airmen, prior to returning the estates to their owners.

## DISCOVERY

The Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society had decided to publish a pictorial history of the Hamilton Mountain. Photographs, memorabilia, and anecdotes were collected and gathered from many sources and individuals. The publication was well received and two of the photographs used belonged to Mrs. Viva Voelker of Waterloo.

Doug Embleton, who had grown up on Auchmar Estate, returned the photographs to Mrs. Voelker. During the course of their visit, Mrs. Voelker asked Doug if the society would be interested in three rolls of film shot by her husband in 1943. Doug agreed to take the film.



The film was brought back to Hamilton. It was decided to transfer the old films onto a stable format and a copy was produced. Members of the society watched as the silent movies, 29 minutes in length, played out. They had found the proverbial “Gold Mine.”

The society decided that a commentary and musical score should be added. The films also required synchronizing to ensure that the story flowed evenly. With the guidance, assistance and efforts of many talented individuals, working in collaboration with the society, **Auchmar. The War Years** was created.

Auchmar: The War Years is available from the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society.

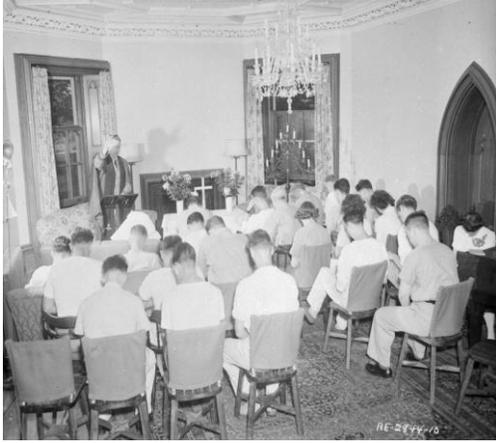
There was an underlying unanswered question when viewing the film; why were the hands burned most often?

George Hall, a former Spitfire pilot explained to Stewart Leslie. When the plane is hit, the pilot had to remove his gloves to undo the hasps, so that the canopy would get blown away.



# THE PHOTO GALLERY

Dedicated to the Airmen and R.C.A.F. No. 2



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)

# AUCHMAR – THE WAR YEARS

## An Evening at The Westdale

**IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE AIRMEN** who served in the R.C.A.F. during World War II, and to highlight part of Auchmar Estate's military history, The Friends of Auchmar presented Auchmar- The War Years.

Over 300 people gathered at the The Westdale for the event which featured as its centrepiece, the film Auchmar-The War Story. This film was compiled from the home movies Dr. Philip Voelker made about R.C.A.F. No. 2., by the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society.

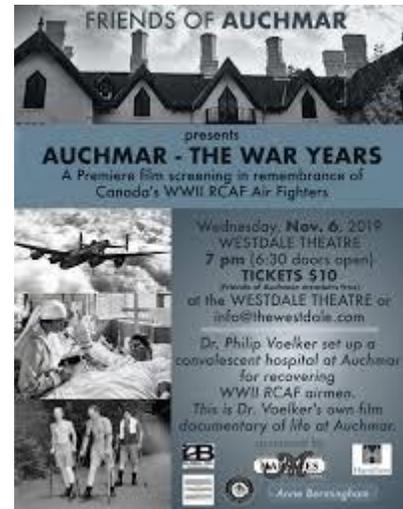
A panel discussion with Doug Embleton, Jon Soyka, and Bill Carey Jr., who had direct involvement with the film from various perspectives was moderated by Bob Cowan of CHCH Television.

A brief vignette of Reunion of Giants, the film produced by the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum which details the rendezvous of the two remaining flight worthy Lancaster bombers in England was shown.

The audience, through door prize draws, had the opportunity to attend a screening of Reunion of Giants and to attend the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum.

Mark McNeil and Les Brown played the original song Private Riley (R.H.L.I.) to close out the evening.

The Friends of Auchmar thank all who gave of their time, donations in kind, and provided support to this an enjoyable evening.



## CONTACT US

**LOOKING TO REACH** the Friends of Auchmar and not sure how? Do you want to attend our public meeting? Would you like a little bit of information? Do you have a comment? Would you like to become involved? Do you have a memory or story about Auchmar that you wish to share?

Here are the ways:

Website: [www.friendsofauchmar.ca](http://www.friendsofauchmar.ca)

General Information Email: [info@friendsofauchmar.ca](mailto:info@friendsofauchmar.ca)

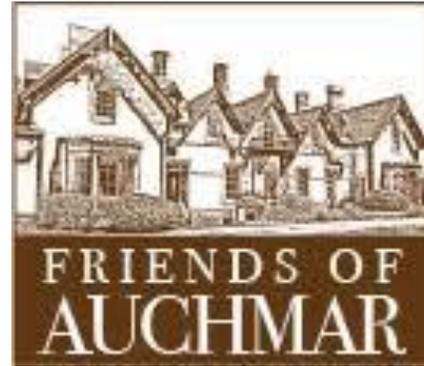
Membership: [membership@friendsofauchmar.ca](mailto:membership@friendsofauchmar.ca)

Twitter: @FOAuchmar.ca

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/friendsofauchmar](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofauchmar)

OR

Just come up and speak with us.



## PHOTO CREDITS

Page 1 R.C.A.F. No. 2 Sign, Airmen at Wynnstay, R.C.A.F. card (Sourced at F.O.A.) (Hamilton Public Library).

Page 2 Airmen at Auchmar (Sourced at F.O.A.) (Hamilton Public Library)

Page 3 Dr. Philip and Viva Voelker, (Maggie Voelker) Film Reel (The Hamilton Spectator, P. Wilson).

Page 4 Photo Gallery Photos 1, 2, 3, 5, (Sourced at F.O.A.) Photo 4 Private Collection (D. Embleton)

Page 5 Poster (F.O.A. Events) Westdale Audience, Bob Cowan & Doug Embleton (Fotograf Geissler) (F.O.A. Events).

Page 6 Auchmar Estate during the War Years (Sourced at Friends of Auchmar).



