

FREE

HURON COUNTY MUSEUM AND HISTORIC GAOL

2018 NEWSLETTER



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2018 Agricultural Exhibit
Creating a More Accessible Gaol
Volunteer Profiles
Meet the Archivist
and much more!

The 2018 Agricultural Exhibit will
feature photography depicting
a modern rural Huron County



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THE STORIES OF HURON

The Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol strives to engage our community in preserving, sharing and celebrating Huron County Culture.

One of the ways we achieve this goal is through compelling storytelling. We share stories of Huron's past and current culture in an effort to promote a better understanding of our collective heritage and foster dialogue, curiosity, knowledge and self-reflection.

We share these stories in our exhibit spaces, through creative programming, on-line and by providing access to our resources to other local storytellers.

We thank you for joining us in our effort to preserve and celebrate Huron's culture!

Always Changing. Always Inspiring.

www.HuronCountyMuseum.ca
Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol
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A COMMUNITY COLLECTION

The Huron County Pioneer Museum opened in 1951 with just over 1,000 objects from the collection of it's founder, Joseph Herbert Neill. Today, the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol houses over 30,000 historical and cultural artifacts related to county life - all donated by the community!



2018 is going to be the Museum's most exciting season yet!

Our upcoming exhibits and programs will explore themes facing a modern rural community in ways we've never done before! We are committed to not only sharing stories of Huron's past but also engaging in conversations about the successes and challenges facing the County today.

This year, we will push the limits of our exhibit spaces as we design our exhibits using new techniques and new mediums. We will continue to expand the programs we offer and engage in even more interactive storytelling.

I am thrilled to say that the Museum has never been more relevant or more engaged in the community. Through shared vision, hard work, and many collaborations the Museum has become an integral cultural contributor in Huron County. All of the staff and volunteers at the Museum are looking forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.

We hope you will join us!

Meighan Wark

Director of Cultural Services
Acting CAO
County of Huron

Volunteer Profile: Colleen

THE ROLE OF MRS. DICKSON

A veteran of the Museum's *Behind the Bars* program, Colleen Maguire has been the face of "Mrs. Dickson", the Gaol Matron, for five seasons and counting. Colleen is a Goderich native who is semi-retired from a 37 year career in diagnostic imaging at the Goderich Hospital. Learn more about Colleen and her development of the historic character of Mrs. Dickson.

How much research went in to developing this character? "I have been researching Mrs. Dickson for 5 years now and am still looking for more stories. The Museum started me off with the basic information that they knew. Being an amateur genealogist, I then researched the Dickson family and built their family tree. I then turned to the Huron Signal newspapers and found lots of interesting things about them and the Gaol including death notices for their two sons. James Forrest Dickson, their 24 yr old son who was the editor of the Huron Signal, died in a tragic sailing accident and the papers were full of that story. Also their 20 year old son, Thomas contracted typhoid fever while in Toronto at pharmacy school and died. The biggest newspaper find was Mrs. Dickson's long obituary which described her in glowing terms, with a sterling character and compassion for the inmates of the Gaol. The night I discovered an on-line portrait of Mrs. Dickson posted by the St Mary's Museum was thrilling. Mr. William Dickson's daily journal has recently come to light and I am in the process of reading it word for word. It is giving me a good insight into the life of the

Gaoler and his family living in the apartment inside the Gaol. Lastly, I have enough material that I wrote and performed a one-woman play which I presented at the *Staging Our Histories* event."

Can you relate to Mrs. Dickson personally? "Absolutely! Since there was no House of Refuge in Huron County at her time, Mrs. Dickson had to care for old people with no place else to go, unwed mothers and their babies, vagrant families with young children, and lunatics (some with what we would today call postpartum depression.) She saw the plight of these poor unfortunate people cast off by society. Today we would say that Margaret Dickson was a social worker long before the term became fashionable and she championed, during her 19 years as Gaol Matron, for the building of a House of Refuge. Of note, the House of Refuge opened in Clinton the week before Mrs Dickson died, Nov 6, 1895. I relate to Mrs. Dickson because I have spent my whole life working in healthcare with compassion."



"Mrs. Dickson" is portrayed by Goderich native, Colleen Maguire

What haunts you most about the Gaol? "The fact that I am walking on the same floor boards in the same room as Mrs. Dickson. I am honored to share her story and that of her family with visitors. She may be gone but she is not forgotten. I visit her grave site at the beginning and end of the summer."

What do you enjoy most about volunteering for Behind the Bars? "Watching the expression on the visitors faces, particularly children's faces when it dawns on them what life was like for people back in the 1870, 80's and 90's."

Why do you feel telling stories of Huron's past is so important? "We enjoy the life we live today because of the hard-work, struggles, sacrifice, and diligence of the people who lived and worked here in days gone by. We owe them a debt of gratitude."



**BEHIND
THE BARS**

Huron Historic Gaol

www.HuronCountyMuseum.ca

SOLVING THE CHALLENGE OF ACCESSIBILITY AT THE GAOL

The uneven floors, narrow hallways and steep spiral stairway found in the Huron Historic Gaol can pose a challenge for even the most able-bodied person.

This year, Museum staff are addressing this issue by developing a touch screen kiosk featuring video shorts, photography, written stories, and 360° virtual tours to be placed on the main floor of the Gaol. This will provide visitors with mobility restrictions a virtual experience. Two additional portable kiosks will provide staff with an interactive outreach tool -

The Gaol has never been more accessible!

LOOK FOR IT IN 2018!





THE AGRICULTURE EXHIBIT

*spring/summer
2018*



THE MODERN FARMER

Preparations are currently underway for the 2018 Agriculture Exhibit that will occupy both the Feature Gallery and the Temporary Gallery in the spring and summer of 2018.



Museum Senior Curator, Elizabeth French-Gibson, will be exploring themes facing modern farmers. This dynamic exhibit will pair agricultural photography by Erin Samuells with historic artifacts, images and stories.

Volunteer Profile: Betty

SHE GROWS VEGETABLES

Digging in the dirt with Betty Hendriks we learn about historic gardening techniques, healthy eating, and the importance of community service.

What made you decide to create a community garden? "When I was a volunteer at *Behind The Bars* I asked if we could put in a garden in the largest court yard at the Gaol. The vegetables that were planted in this garden were based on the menus that the prisoners had in the early 1900s.

It became apparent early on that the children visiting the Gaol had very little experience in gardens. Many of them couldn't even identify the vegetables! So I asked staff if we could grow a second garden at the Museum that people could view and enjoy at all times. The rows in this garden were all clearly labeled so that if people were not sure what the plants were they could take a quick peek and find out.

When I was working in this garden people would often stop by and talk about their gardening experiences growing up. Some said that they had children, or grand children who would like to learn more about growing food. So we went back to the Museum to ask for permission to start a Children's Garden Program where children could learn how to grow their own food, eat vegetables that they may not have tried otherwise and grow food for the local food banks."

Education is a big part of this project, what are you hoping kids and families will take away from their experience in the garden?

"There are 5 adult volunteers who all have years of experience growing gardens - because their experiences are all different, the adults have learned new gardening techniques from each other as well as sharing this knowledge with the children. Growing food can be very satisfying; you start out with a patch of soil and end up with food that you can eat. The children also learn how to grow food without chemicals or insecticides. The children pick their own vegetables and bring them home to share with their families!"

What do you enjoy most about the garden? "I find that gardening is very relaxing and at the same time very social. People seem to be naturally drawn to the garden and often share stories and experiences."

What advice do you have for someone starting their own backyard garden? "I would suggest that they start small, and start with plants that are easy to care for, and are bug and rabbit resistant. This year we added stand up gardening boxes at the museum garden so that the children could learn about different kinds of gardens. Not everyone has room for a traditional garden."

Betty Hendriks cares for the Museum's two Community Gardens



THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN PROJECT

FREE for children age 8-10
Saturday mornings
spring/summer/fall

All of the organic produce grown in the garden is donated to the local food bank!

STAFF PICKS

Museum staff share their favourite artifacts from the collection.

SINEAD

"This Radha Krishna was originally on loan as part of the Museum's "Stories of Immigration and Migration" exhibit in 2016, and then donated permanently by the Patel family of Clinton. When researching this exhibit, a common theme emerged regarding the importance of faith in retaining culture in a new home and building new community ties.

Depictions of Lord Krishna with his beloved Radha, foremost of the Gopis (dairymaids), celebrate the love and eternal devotion between humanity and the divine, and Krishna playing his flute for Radha or dancing with the Gopis are some of my favourite subjects to recognize in religious art."



JACOB C

"It's a tough choice, but I think my favourite artifact is one of *The Twelve Apostles* jugs on exhibit on the west end of the Latimer Gallery.

There's a comedic value which needn't really be explained, that the man who might be performing delicate surgeries in the heat of battle is in fact carrying around eleven *gallons* of liquor.

The most amusing part, I think, is the very appropriate words on the display: "the drinking of the 'Tiger' might be seen as excessive".

Yes, indeed, I think it might."

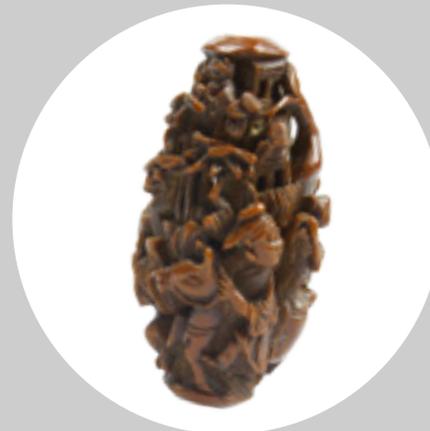


DANA

"I found three of these intricately carved beads in an envelope while doing inventory in January. I had never seen anything like them. With fine, miniature detail, they are exquisite. I used to do a lot of miniature work, so this is why I was so drawn to them, and also I knew there was more to the story.

The photo on the card file showed possibly 13 beads of the same size and shape. Another staff member found the rest of the necklace, photographed it and then restrung it. I think only 1 bead was missing in the end.

I argue that it is Chinese, because of the style, not Indian as the file says, but hey, we found them!"



LIVIA

"This odd device looks like it could be straight from a "Saw" movie, but I love how this hair curler shows how much our technology has changed.

This bigger version of today's curling iron would have been used in beauty parlours to curl hair with heat, but was much more awkward and time consuming!"





“Having an archives in Huron County is important because it gives the people of Huron access to the written and pictorial history of their County. They don’t have to travel to Toronto or Ottawa to find out more about their ancestors or their property. They can visit the Archives in the morning and, using that information, they can drive out to the family property or their great-grandmother’s grave marker in the afternoon!”

Staff Profile: Jenna
THE ARCHIVIST

Jenna Leifso, the Museum’s Archivist, has an Honours Double Major in History and Bioarchaeological Anthropology as well as a Masters in History from Western University. We recently had the chance to sit down with Jenna and learn more about her passion for history and her role in the Archives!

What made you choose museum work? “Museum work chose me. On family vacations we always went to museums and historical villages and I thought it would be the coolest job to churn butter in a village wearing an early settler dress. I quickly realized I was not cut out for working outside in the summer so I sought a career that still involved history and working with people, but required air conditioning.”

What kind of research is being done in the archives? “All kinds of research happens in the Reading Room! A lot of people come to research their family history, some want to find out more about their property, others are writing books or working on special projects and come here to do primary source research. My own personal research has been trying to track down all the women from Huron County who were nursing sisters or VADs in the First World War.”

Where are your researches visiting from? “Researchers and research requests come from all over the world! In the summer months, visitors come from all over the United States including California, Michigan, Tennessee, Washington, and Ohio. We also get Canadians from British Columbia, Alberta, and all over Ontario. Some people travel from England to visit the World War II air training sites their relatives attended.”

People can also email Jenna if they are unable to make the trip to Huron County to help them find information:
 jleifso@huroncounty.ca

Anyone can come to the Reading Room to do research. Amateur genealogists, Bed & Breakfast owners, high school students, university professors, actors, artists, archaeologists, planners, and the list can go on and on!”



One of Jenna’s favourite photos from the Archives: R.R. Sallows - Collison’s Millinery Store c. 1910



**DIGITIZED
NEWSPAPER
COLLECTION**

available on-line
www.HuronCountyMuseum.ca



The Huron County Museum has digitized more than 14,000 individual newspapers spanning from 1848 to 2008 and the collection is growing every day!

The Huron County Museum, in partnership with the Huron County Library, is continuing to digitize historical newspapers from across the County. Over 130 years of local newspapers can now be accessed from the comfort of your own home through our text-searchable database available on the Museum's website.

This exciting project is highly valuable for historians, genealogical researchers, or for casual researchers who wish to reminisce about days gone by. Our intention is to both save researchers time and allow them to find information they did not know existed or may have overlooked.

BECOME A MUSEUM MEMBER!

Membership has its benefits

Huron County Museum members are entitled to unlimited regular admission at five great Ontario Museums, discounts at Huron County Museum events, discounts at the Huron County Museum Gift Shop and much more!

ALL MEMBERS ENJOY UNLIMITED REGULAR ADMISSION AT:

**Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol
Grey Roots Museum & Archives
Waterloo Region Museum
Simcoe County Museum
Bruce County Museum**

By purchasing a Museum Membership you are contributing to the preservation of Huron County's past and continuing story!

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