



HURON COUNTY MUSEUM AND HISTORIC GAOL

2019 ANNUAL REPORT





Corporation of the County of Huron

2019 ANNUAL REPORT: **HURON COUNTY MUSEUM & HISTORIC GAOL**

MISSION

The Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol engage our community in preserving, sharing, and fostering Huron County culture.

VISION

The vision of the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol is to nurture and inspire heritage and culture.

HURON COUNTY MUSEUM

110 North Street, Goderich On, N7A 2T8

p. 519-524-2686

f. 519-524-1922

e. museum@huroncounty.ca

w. www.HuronCountyMuseum.ca

HURON HISTORIC GAOL

181 Victoria Street North, Goderich On

p. 519-524-6971



MUSEUM PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT

A new five year Strategic Plan was developed and introduced in 2019. During the period this strategic plan covers, we will aim to engage with more people to increase a shared understanding of our culture, leading to greater social cohesion and stronger Huron County roots. It will also be important to put strategies and practices in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization. We understand that preserving the past means we will ensure future generations will have access to artifacts, places and stories. Amidst the rapidly changing environment, it will be critical that flexibility and adaptability are embraced to improve responsiveness to new opportunities, user needs and societal trends.

With community, staff and stakeholder input the following goals were determined for the Museum and Gaol:

Engage with more people:

1. Engage and inspire the next generation of Huron County by sparking an interest in their heritage and culture.
2. Connect with audiences beyond physical sites.
3. Create dynamic exhibits that generate interest and attention.
4. Maximize existing footprint to support enhanced participation.
5. Increase the strength of the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol brand.

Long-term sustainability:

1. Seek out partnerships to share skills, resources and ideas.
2. Implement environmentally sustainable practices and celebrate natural heritage.
3. Build support with funders and advocates to ensure long term financial support.
4. Ensure sufficient staffing levels to maintain energy and support for new strategic directions.

Throughout 2019, the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol worked to engage with people throughout Huron County using outreach opportunities to increase exposure; worked on collections projects that will make collections more discoverable online in the future; updated permanent exhibits to refresh spaces to re-engage return visitors; and produced two temporary exhibits and brought in one traveling exhibit for our visitors. We also worked to seek out partnerships for both funding and programming; took Museum workshops and displays to local libraries and other venues to meet people where they were; worked to establish new partnerships to ensure support of Museum objectives; and focused on a targeted financial giving strategy with sponsorship campaign and marquee event to support selected projects.





INITIATIVES & FUNDING

The Huron Historic Gaol underwent a major upgrade in regards to life safety requirements. An exterior staircase and fire escape doors were installed, and further windows and doors were altered to enhance the safety of the building. The project allowed for the reopening of the majority of the second and third floor exhibit spaces for visitor access. This was a welcome addition for the 2019 season.



At the Huron County Museum renovations included an expansion of Archival research spaces with inclusion of office space for staff and volunteers; new flooring and redesign of the front lobby and reception; and new lower maintenance flooring for the lounge and upper mezzanine. Renovations gave a fresh new welcome face to the Museum & Archives.

A major initiative for 2019 was the partnership with the Huron County Libraries as part of a fundraising and sponsorship campaign to fund the Newspaper Digitization project. Fundraising activities included a quilt raffle in partnership with the Goderich Quilters Guild; direct donation campaign including partnerships with local coffee shops; and a Cash! Live at the Gaol evening concert event (recreation of Johnny Cash's iconic Folsom Prison show).



In partnership with the generous sponsorship of Compass Minerals, the Huron County Museum announced bus transportation funding available for Huron & Perth schools visiting the Museum during the 2019/2020 school year. Bookings for the Compass Minerals Museum Bus program officially opened on the first day of school and received high interest from communities who could not ordinarily afford busing to the Museum, including North Huron, South Huron and Perth County. Schools booked a variety of programming provided by the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol. Funding for busing was offered on first come first booked basis, while funds lasted.

Grant funding was received from Young Canada Works in Heritage and Canada Summer Jobs for summer staffing opportunities for the Museum, Gaol and Archives. An internship placement from Fanshawe College's Honours Bachelor of Early Childhood Leadership program filled the summer Education & Programming Assistant position for the Museum and Historic Gaol. A co-operative education student placement with Goderich District Collegiate Institute also assisted with exhibit projects.



EXHIBITS

The Huron County Museum facilitated a number of temporary exhibits on site throughout 2019.

SAY IT WITH STYLE

The "Say it with Style" exhibit showcased textile artifacts from the Museum collection including clothing, quilts, bedding, and fashion accessories based on the theme of fashion idioms.

IRON WILLED: WOMEN IN STEM

The Huron County Museum was the first Canadian Museum to host the traveling exhibit "Iron Willed: Women in STEM" from Ingenium - Canada's Museums of Science and Innovation in Ottawa. Additional stories of Huron County residents who made contributions to science, technology, engineering and math were added to the room's feature wall. Harriet Brooks, Canada's first women's physicist, originally from Exeter, Ontario, was featured in the Ingenium exhibit. Sponsorship for the STEM exhibit was received from B.M. Ross and Associates Ltd.

HURON COUNTY ART SHOW & SALE

The annual Huron County Art Show & Sale displayed the works of 35 artists from around Huron County with the exhibition of their views of Huron County. Two artworks were selected from the entries for addition to the Huron County Art Bank.

COMMUNITY CURATORS

The Community Curators 2019 exhibit, Queer Stories, featured stories and objects contributed by 3 guest community curators that related to their experience growing up gay, lesbian and bisexual in Huron County. Curators came originally from Goderich and the Municipality of Bluewater. The display also featured the history of the South Huron District High School Gay Straight Alliance in Exeter, Huron's first Gay Straight Alliance.

OUTREACH EXHIBITS

Outreach exhibits were installed in the Goderich Library, Seaforth Library, Zurich Library and Huronlea Homes for the Aged. These exhibits allowed for smaller topics to be displayed in the community for the reminiscence and enjoyment of visitors and residents of those areas.

Keep it under your hat





EXHIBITS

Some of the Permanent exhibit galleries also received remediation and updates.

NEILL GALLERY

In the Permanent Galleries, the redevelopment of the galleries took place throughout 2019. Early in the year new interpretive panels in the early settlement and barn building galleries were installed, with additional repainting. Permanent Gallery updates in the fall included new exhibit panels for the Central School, Doty Engine, Essex car, Train #6275, and four panels in the Victorian Apartment. Painting also took place in the Main Street entrance, Ship's Berth and full Feature Gallery.

The mezzanine on the second floor of the Museum was redeveloped as a hands-on activity area for children called "Become a Curator". Visitors are encouraged to use selected items to create and promote their own exhibits in the Museum. This area has become a popular space for alternative programming at the Museum as craft area, refreshment area, and relaxation/quiet space.

Two smaller exhibits were installed at the Museum by local community organizations. The Alzheimer's society installed a temporary two week exhibit in the Feature Gallery of the Museum based on the society's work with local day centres and secondary schools. The "Timeslips" Exhibit took a selection of photographs from the Reuben Sallows collection to be interpreted in written format by attendees at local day centres and interpreted visually by art students at the local secondary schools. The United Way of Perth-Huron used the Feature Gallery for the duration of the November as the Huron County launch & exhibit space for the Photovoice exhibit which displayed photographs taken by local residents to illustrate the reality of food, housing and social insecurities.

A partnership with the Huron County Federation of Agriculture continued with a new addition to the Huron County Agriculture Hall of Fame. The 2019 Agriculture Hall of Fame Inductee from Huron County was John Maaskant.



SPECIAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol facilitated a variety of special events & activities over the course of 2019.

The Behind the Bars popular interpretive tours were well attended at the Historic Gaol again this year. Volunteers enthusiastically portrayed Gaol inmates and staff, circa 1840 – 1910. Held twice weekly during July & and three times weekly in August, over 1,000 visitors attended the evening events.

In partnership with the Museum Friends, the Annual Family & Heritage Day was held in February and the Haunted Main Street Halloween event was held in October. Overall, the 59 volunteers at the Museum & Gaol provided 2,710 hours of volunteer work including visitor services, cataloging, special events, Behind the Bars programming, collections assistance, and outreach.

One of the major events for 2019 was Historic Places Day which took place at both the Museum and Gaol in July. At the Museum, visitors explored a S.T.E.A.M. Expo with hands on science, technology, engineering, art, and math learning interactives with visiting STEAM experts including Earth Science Museum: University of Waterloo, Bell Homestead National Historic Site, Nick Bastian, St. Thomas STEAM Centre, Huron County Library Maker Technology, and Avon Maitland District School Board. Events at the Historic Gaol focused on Crimes and Escapes. Activities included a meet and greet with an

O.P.P. officer, historic mug shots & prison rations, exercise yard activities with Highland Strength, and investigation of true crimes and real escapes. The Historic Gaol and Museum were featured on the National Trust's list of "How 7 Sites Celebrated Canada Historic Places Day," which selected from historic places across Canada.

Programming & Development staff also coordinated activities throughout the year including

- STEAM Power summer camps & PD Day camps for children;
- evening Gaol tours;
- themed International Movie Nights;
- interactive children's Dance and Storytelling workshop (Kathak dance);
- beginner's beading workshop by an Ojibwe bead artist;
- Pow Wow dancing and drumming performance by Eagleflight Singers and Dancers;
- Guest speaker presentation by the creator of Wonder: The Play about Harriet Brooks,
- 1920s flapper fashion workshop and presentation;
- Haunted Gaol activities; and
- Holiday Open House at both sites.



OUTREACH, PRESENTATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

Outreach took the Museum & Gaol to local libraries with Museum on the Go, as well as to the Huron Multicultural Festival; Goderich Children's Festival; Goderich Night Market; the Huron Perth Agriculture & Water Festival; Van Egmond House Victoria Day; Bayfield, Brussels and Exeter farmers markets; Huron Drainage Innovation Day in Clinton; and Huron County Plowing Match.

Staff also presented on various topics such as Museum and Gaol history, digitized newspapers, documenting family treasures, archival genealogical resources, and reminiscence topics to groups across Huron County.

Partnerships continued with a variety of local groups including Alzheimer Society, Goderich Escape Room, Rural Response for Healthy Children Dads n' Kids nights, and Blyth Festival. New partnerships were developed with the Rotaract Goderich for summer movie nights and fall fundraiser, and Rainbow Optimist Club of Southwestern Ontario for Drag Queen Storytime.

Education programmes and tours were provided for many groups from our local school boards and groups from across the province.





COLLECTIONS

Donations to the Collection

There were 47 accessions in 2019. The following items are a representative sample of items donated to the collection in 2019:

- Framed oil on canvas painting by William Nicoll Cresswell titled "Goderich Harbor - Outpost Scene"
- Pair of boy's shoes, Skipalongs from Seaforth Shoes Ltd.
- Pump organ from the Clinton Organ Co. (1890 - 1893)
- Two wooden signs for Clinton News Record; and 12 boxes of photographs and negatives from Clinton News Record
- Uniform for the Celtic Blue Highlanders (teen size)
- Huron County Police Constable badge
- Collection including two inlaid tables, several small carvings, poetry and drawings produced by Michael Meidinger of Zurich (1873-1968)
- Signature quilt made by the St. Andrews Guild (of St George's Church) or St. Andrew's Ward in 1944 as a fundraiser for the war efforts
- Various archival documents including photographs, documents, deeds, journals, scrapbooks, minute books, etc.

One artifact was purchased for the Collection in 2019 – a Mamma's bench that once belonged to the Skimings

Family of Goderich, Ont. The provenance indicates Eloise A. Skimings, the Poetess of Lake Huron, and her two brothers were rocked in this Cradle. The cradle was later sold by Gavin H. Green who owned the "Yea Old Curiosity Shop, Goderich, Ont."

Three signature quilts from the Huron County Museum collection were loaned to the Founders' Gallery at the Military Museums in Calgary for the exhibit "Keepsakes of Conflict: Trench Art and Other Canadian War-related Craft with Red Cross Quilts of the Great War".

Collections staff and volunteers worked throughout 2019 with record reconciliations, artifact cataloging, textile inventory, photo digitization, and organization work in Main Storage. Work continued on addition of artifacts to the PastPerfect online collection database finishing the year with 3650 artifact and photograph records available on-line to researchers.

The 2019 Collections Committee met through the year to discuss Museum & Gaol collections issues including storage, space needs, deaccessioning, and site planning.

Members consisted of:

Rhea Hamilton-Seeger (Chair), Anne Capper, Al Sanders, Louise Dockstader, Christopher Spaleta, Ted Turner, Sharlene Bolen, Jerry McDonnell, Jim Ginn (Warden)



CONSERVATION

Collections staff from the Huron County Museum continued to work through a RE_ORG review of the Huron County Museum, collection and storage areas. A project to inventory, condition report, and replace the acid free tissue within the boxed textile storage was initiated with much help from Museum volunteers.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staff participated in a variety of workshops and webinars over the course of the year including those offered through Ontario Museum Association, Canadian Conservation Institute, Archives Association of Ontario, and ArtsBuild Accessibility.

Museum staff attended the annual conferences of the Ontario Museum Association, Archives Association of Ontario, and Association of Canadian Archivists. Staff also attended the Symposium on Family Learning, Inclusion and the Value of Play in Museums, and the Technology in Museum Symposium in Ottawa hosted by the Canadian Museum Association.

The Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol are active members of the Huron Perth Middlesex Museum Network and the PastPerfect Users group.

“If you’re in Goderich, you need to visit the Gaol.”

“I was pleasantly surprised to see the women in STEM exhibit while I was there!”

“An exhibition using some of the garments left to the museum over the years have been imaginatively displayed to illustrate various idioms.... Recommended.”

“What a blast! Very Impressed! Highly recommend!”

ATTENDANCE

2019 Site Visits		Museum	Gaol
Individual Admissions		6,460	8,593
Individual Admissions – Huron County Library Card		1,301	453
Groups, Programmes, Special Events		3,568	3,336
Outreach		3,917	137
Object Depositors, OGS, Researchers, Volunteers, Others		2,395	1,615
Meetings, Rentals		2,188	251
Annual Total	2019	19,829	14,385
Comparative Years	2018	21,278	12,888
	2017	22,146	14,844