



HURON COUNTY MUSEUM AND HISTORIC GAOL

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

*Jack McLaren as Si Perkins in "Commandeered".
Courtesy PPCLI Archives, Calgary, C130-3-1 No 6 001*





Corporation of the County of Huron

2020 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.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol designs its exhibits, programs, events, and services through a lens that includes a wide range of ideas, voices and viewpoints that reflect and engage Huron County's diverse community.

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

The five year Strategic Plan was developed and introduced in 2019. During the period this strategic plan covers, the Museum aims 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. It was proven many times in 2020 that amidst a rapidly changing environment, it was critical that flexibility and adaptability were embraced to improve responsiveness to new opportunities, user needs and societal trends.

With community, staff and stakeholder input the following goals are part of the strategic plan 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 2020, the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol worked to engage with people throughout Huron County and beyond using virtual outreach opportunities to increase exposure; worked on collections projects that will make collections more discoverable online; updated permanent exhibits to include virtual components to re-engage visitors; and produced two temporary exhibits for our visitors able to visit in-person. We also worked to provide in person programming during the first months of 2020 and virtual engagement through programming and social media initiatives to continue to highlight the collection and Huron County stories throughout the COVID-19 closures.





COVID-19

Due to COVID-19 protocols, the Huron County Museum cancelled all events and programs on March 14, 2021, closed to the public on March 17th and shut down fully on March 25th. Staff were primarily placed on work from home projects. Collections staff returned to work at the Museum mid-June. Following the Phase 3 announcement, staff prepared the site for re-opening, including the installation of signage and the closure or removal of high-contact exhibit interactives. The Museum re-opened to the public with limited hours and capacity on August 1st. Donations of artifacts and archival materials and in-person research were suspended during the site closures and resumed in September. After December 26th, the Museum closed to the public as part of the province-wide shutdown.

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

The Museum & Gaol website was redeveloped to be more user friendly and mobile friendly with inclusion of accessibility standards. During the COVID-19 pandemic social media was a vital part of the work completed by the staff including artifact highlights, blog posts, virtual tours, and activity suggestions.

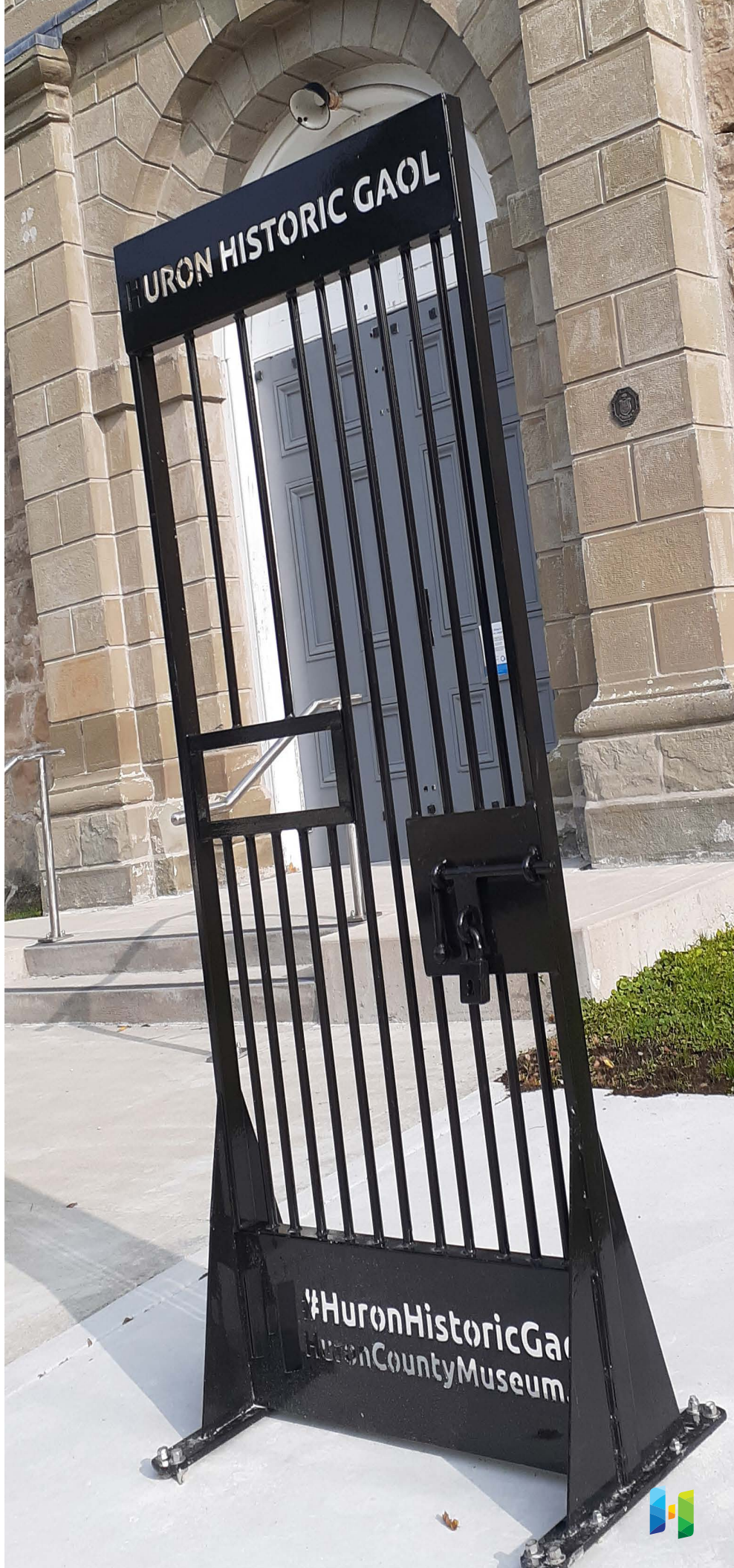
Social Media Followers (December 2020)					
Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Trip Advisor - Museum Reviews	Trip Advisor - Gaol Reviews	MailChimp - Newsletter Subscribers
2,747	1,671	1,399	92	169	755



INITIATIVES & FUNDING

The Huron Historic Gaol 'selfie station' was installed outside the entrance of the Gaol thanks to funding from the Regional Tourism Organization 4's Shareable Moments Challenge and Grant. The selfie station features a recreation of the Gaol's iconic iron doors made by a local blacksmith, which visitors can pose with for a photograph even when the Gaol is closed.

Grant funding was received from Young Canada Works in Heritage and Canada Summer Jobs and Canada Summer Jobs for summer/fall staffing opportunities for the Museum & Gaol. Funding from Young Canada Works at Building Careers in Heritage Internship provided funding for an additional Collections staff person. A co-operative education student placement with Central Huron Secondary School assisted at the beginning of 2020 with collections PastPerfect updates.



SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- Saturday afternoon 'Make a Mess' unstructured play-times took place January through March. Kid-led play included a rotating selection of stations that changed every weekend. The successful afternoons had attendance and participation from families across Huron County.
- Multilingual Movie Nights also occurred monthly in early 2020. Each movie night was paired with treats from local restaurants.
- Wellness activities at the Museum included the development of step counted walking tours of the Museum. Walkers are invited indoors to walk if they are deterred from walking outdoors due to weather. Weekly Yoga sessions also rotated throughout the Museum so that families experienced different exhibits throughout the month as part of the Museum's winter wellness programming.
- In partnership with the Museum Friends, the Annual Family & Heritage Day was held in February. Overall, the volunteers at the Museum & Gaol provided hours of volunteer work including visitor services, cataloging, special events, gardening projects and collections assistance while the sites were open.
- Virtual programming included a History at Home Series with topics including the Huron Historic Gaol, Huron County's Black Settlers, and Settling in Huron County. For the National Trust for Canada's National Historic Places Day (a nation-wide celebration of heritage sites), staff hosted a virtual event at the Huron Historic Gaol, including a live tour and Q & A. Later in the year a virtual talk related to the Reflections exhibit featured author Shawn Henshall.
- Programming & Development staff coordinated social media activities throughout the year as at home activities.
- To coincide with day camp themes going online, as well as the TD Summer Reading Program, Museum and Huron County Library staff collaborated to create an activity booklet and kit to be distributed to children across the county by the Huron County Food Distribution Centre. The booklet contained paper activities, information on how to access online resources from the Museum and Libraries, as well as suggestions for outdoor/off-screen fun. The bags also include tactile materials including craft kits, board games, pinwheels, stickers and paper templates.
- Education programmes and tours were provided for in person groups during the first 3 months of the year including class visits, Kids 'n Dads evening programmes, and PD Day camps. Additional programming was offered virtually for the remainder of the year.
- Groups also made use of the Museum for various in person presentations pre-COVID-19 including Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation, Huron County Alzheimer's Society, and The Gateway Centre for Excellence in Rural Health.
- In early March, the Huron Historic Gaol was used for filming by Chasing Justice (Voice) Inc., Calgary, AB for a docu-drama feature film inspired by the Life of Steven Truscott told from the perspective of his wife, Marlene Truscott.
- Although the Historic Gaol remained closed for the year due to COVID-19, staff researched and completed a draft of a history booklet of prisoner profiles, featuring the lesser told stories of the Gaol. Watch for the publication in 2021.



EXHIBITS

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

With many popular interactives (ex. J. H. Neill's models) not available for hands-on contact due to COVID-19, staff added "Eye Spy" prompts to all of the permanent galleries to encourage children and families to take a closer look at the artifacts and interact with each other in the space.

During the COVID-19 pivot to virtual, a variety of on-line exhibits were added to the Huron County Museum website. All content from the Huron County Main Street and Military Gallery interactive exhibit iPads was added, and content was reformatted from the 2018 temporary exhibit "Farmtastic" to create the virtual exhibits.

REFLECTIONS: THE LIFE AND WORKS OF J.W. MCLAREN

The "Reflections: The Life and Works of J. W. McLaren" exhibit was developed early in 2020 and finally opened as the Museum re-opened to visitors late 2020. The exhibit featured the life of artist J. W. McLaren and included loaned artworks from the local community as well as the Toronto Arts and Letters Club, Princess Patricia's Archives, the McLaren Family and others. The exhibit was presented in partnership with the Huron County Historical Society.

RIPPLE EFFECT

The "Ripple Effect" exhibit was developed as an interactive exhibit to explore Huron County's waterways. The exhibit opened for only a few days in March but will be held over until 2021 when hopefully interactive exhibits can re-open. Components of the exhibit were used as virtual engagement items during the summer months.

"(Reflections) is a feast for the eyes and a celebration of a great Canadian who chose Huron County as his studio, landscape and home in the last chapter of his life," Susan Gloucher and Mary Gregg, Huron County Historical Society





COLLECTIONS

Collections staff and volunteers worked throughout 2020 with artifact cataloging, digitization, and organization work in Main Storage and at the large artifact off-site storage. Work continued on the addition of artifacts to the PastPerfect online collection database finishing the year with 5033 artifact and photograph records available on-line to researchers.

A rapid response collecting project, "Collecting Memories: COVID-19" was developed as a call for special "in-the-moment" collecting in regards to Coronavirus and COVID-19. Requested items included photographs, journals, letters, artworks, etc. for future research and exhibition. Community prompts and questions were developed to inspire people's contributions.

The 2020 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, Deb Sholdice, Ted Turner, Sharlene Bolen, Jerry McDonnell, Jim Ginn (Warden)

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Wooden McGaw Railway Station mile board that was located one mile east of the siding. The McGaw Station was demolished in 1964.
- Baby weigh scale from Clinton, ON doctor, Dr. J. Alex Addison who had delivered 2,056 babies by the time he retired.
- Items from the disbanded Dungannon Women's Institute.
- Rattan cradle originally belonging to William and Janet (Patrick) Doig who lived near Gorrie in Howick Township.
- Miscellaneous print block dies related to Champion Road Machinery.
- Handmade items including samplers, wicker table and wicker sewing basket made while at the Clinton Model School circa 1910.
- Police officer's uniform from office who served with the Exeter OPP from 1978 – 1990.
- Morris chair that belonged to WWI Nursing Sister Maud Stirling (1877-1964) and to her father.
- Walkerburn Club items including minute books and a photo graph album.
- Diary of William Webb, 18 slides of the Goderich 150th Parade, a portrait of T. H. Mitchell, 6 negatives of the opening of the Huron County Museum in 1950, a variety of photographs and 4 internal publications issued by Champion Road Machinery, and scrapbook albums containing clippings and cards, and newspapers.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staff participated in a variety of online workshops and webinars over the course of the year including those offered through Ontario Museum Association, Canadian Museum Association, Archives Association of Ontario, American Alliance of Museums, American Association of State and Local History, National Trust, and Cuseum. The majority of presentations were in regards to museum responses, programming, funding, and future planning through the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff also completed the Homelessness Awareness Training online programme by Ryan Dowd.

Museum staff attended the annual conferences of the Ontario Museum Association, and Museum Enterprises Conference.

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

CONSERVATION

The Museum's off-site storage building underwent a renovation in the fall of 2020 to install new flooring and reinforce mezzanine storage areas. The opportunity also allowed staff to complete an inventory of the artifacts including assessment & photographing of the artifacts held within the space.

Collections staff from the Huron County Museum completed 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.



ATTENDANCE

2019 Site Visits		Museum	Gaol
Individual Admissions		875	0
Individual Admissions – Huron County Library Card		1,387	0
Groups, Programmes, Special Events		544	0
Outreach		87	0
Object Depositors, OGS, Researchers, Volunteers, Others		562	10
Meetings, Rentals		92	109
Annual Total	2020	3,929	119
Comparative Years		2019	14,385
		2018	12,888

“Open after a long hiatus, the Huron County Museum currently asks you to book your time for a visit and allows only a handful of people to be in the museum at the same time....The permanent collection is well worth viewing, especially the exhibition on the great storm of 1913 as well as the military collection. Recommended”

“Lots to See. We’ve visited the museum twice in a week. Plenty to see for those of all ages. Very interesting and great place to walk around on a snowy, cold day.”



“Packed full of interesting items and we go every year as part of the family tradition.... Call ahead and book your visit, you will not be disappointed. Great job guys.”