

MAIGazine

The Newsletter of the AAO's Municipal Archives Interest Group

Issue 14

September 2018



Outreach

In

Archives

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*Discover how archives
across Ontario are
reaching out to
connect with their
communities.*

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the MAIG Executive, I am pleased to present the 14th edition of the *MAIGazine*! This issue features some very interesting submissions focused on the theme of archival outreach and community engagement. Various successes, innovations, challenges and ideas are shared within these articles, which will hopefully inspire conversations and new ideas within your respective institutions.

The last few months have seen some changes to the MAIG Executive, as we have begun a new term of office for the Chair and Vice Chair. I am very excited to assume the role of MAIG Chair for the 2018-2021 term and am equally pleased to welcome Megan Lockhart to the fold as our new Vice Chair. Elected last year, Gina Dewaele (née Coady), will continue to act as MAIG's trusty Secretary-Treasurer, rounding out our small but mighty executive.

Having worked as Vice Chair for the past three years, I have learned a tremendous amount from my predecessor Brenda Hicock, as well as from many of my municipal archives colleagues along the way. I would like to thank Brenda for her leadership, as well as Tracey Krause and Juanita Rossiter for their guidance and continued support of MAIG.

Plans for the 2018-2019 Term:

- 20th Annual MAIG Open House - hosted by the Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings
- Development of a MAIG mailing list and member directory
- Connect with Municipal colleagues and institutions
- Update the MAIG website
- 2019 Annual General Meeting

I am always happy to hear from my colleagues, so if you have any news, suggestions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

~ Gillian

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MAIG Executive, 2018-2021

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If you have any questions about MAIG or would like to get involved, please feel free to contact our executive.

Meet the MAIG Executive



Gillian Shaw is the newly elected Chair of MAIG, having begun her tenure on the Executive in 2015 as Vice Chair. She holds a Master of Information degree from the University of Toronto (2011) and is currently pursuing the Certified Records Manager (CRM) designation. Gillian has been the Archival Records Analyst at the City of Vaughan Archives for the past four years, and has experience in archives, museums, and records management for both the public and private sectors. Prior to working at the City of Vaughan Archives, Gillian worked at the City of Markham as a contract Archivist for the Markham Museum, and provided records management support at the Ministry of Health. Gillian is always happy to hear from her colleagues, so if you have any news, suggestions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact her at Gillian.Shaw@vaughan.ca or by phone at 905-832-8585 ext. 8793.



Megan Lockhart is the newest member of the MAIG Executive, sitting as Vice Chair for the 2018-2021 term. She holds a Fine Arts Diploma in Cultural Resource Management and a Professional Specialization Certificate in Collections Management from the University of Victoria (2017). Since March 2018, Megan has worked as the Archives Technician at the Oxford County Archives. Prior to her current position, she occupied various roles at the St. Marys Museum & Archives including Curatorial Assistant, Archives Assistant and Digitization Project Coordinator. Megan can be contacted at mlockhart@oxfordcounty.ca or by phone at 519-539-9800 ext. 3070.



Gina Dewaele has been the Secretary-Treasurer of MAIG since 2014, and will continue to be the Secretary-Treasurer for the 2015-2018 term. She holds a Masters of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Western Ontario (2002) and has been the Archivist Assistant at the Elgin County Archives since October 2002. In addition to her Secretary-Treasurer position with MAIG, she has been the Treasurer for the Southwestern Ontario Chapter since 2010, and has served on the ARCHEION Committee of the AAO. Gina can be contacted by email at gdewaele@elgin.ca or by phone at 519-631-1460 ext. 154.

Minutes from the 2017 Open House

Minutes
Municipal Archives Interest Group
Open House Meeting
September 29th, 2017
City of Ottawa Archives - James. K. Bartleman Centre
(Ottawa, Ontario)

Executive Present:

- Gillian Shaw, Vice-Chair

Executive Regrets:

- Brenda Hicock, Chair
- Gina Dewaele, Secretary-Treasurer

Members Present:

- John Lund, City of Ottawa Archives
- Abigail Miller, Northumberland County Archives
- Dana Thorne, Lambton County Archives
- Emily Neo

1. Welcoming Remarks and Agenda Approval

Gillian called the meeting to order at 3:20 pm and thanked everyone for attending.

Motion to approve the Agenda: Dana Thorne

Seconded: Abigail Miller

Carried.

2. 2016 Open House Minutes

The group moved to approve the Minutes as presented.

Motion to approve the minutes: Abigail Miller

Seconded by: Dana Thorne

Carried.

3. Report of the Chair

Gillian read the report prepared by Brenda Hicock discussing the MAIG AGM in Toronto and the latest edition of the *MAIGazine*. She advised that the terms for the MAIG Chair and Vice-Chair would be ending in 2018 and encouraged members to think about joining the MAIG Executive.

4. Open House Discussion

Future locations for MAIG's Open House were discussed and the following agreed upon:

- 2018 – Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County
- 2019 – Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre
- 2020 – City of Vaughan Archives

5. Other Business

No new business was brought forward.

6. Roundtable

- **John Lund:** John and his team (Jacinda Bain, Paul Henry, Anne Lauzon, Stuart Clarkson and Silvia Kindl) provided MAIG members with several presentations during the tour portion of the MAIG Open House. Discussing their three archival locations, as well as their appraisal methods, outreach strategies, digital substitutes project and conservation methods, the group received a very high-level understanding of how the City of Ottawa Archives functions on a day to day basis. A tour of the facility was also included, which highlighted some the new exhibitions and upcoming City projects.
- **Dana Thorne:** Dana advised that she returned from maternity leave in March and that the Lambton County Archives had been working on a major renovation project. The Archives had run out of storage space and moveable storage had since been installed which helped to more than double their storage capacity. Although there were a few growing pains (e.g. having to change the orientation of boxes for the new shelves and reprint box labels), two extra summer students were hired over the summer which helped staff to return the archives to its pre-renovation state.
- **Emily Neo:** Emily advised that she had just moved to Ontario from New Zealand and was looking for archival opportunities. She was hoping to join the AAO and get more involved with volunteering and seeing how archives in Ontario were run.
- **Abigail Miller:** Abigail advised that Northumberland County Archives had developed two new positions (one in Archives and one in Records Management), and that she was currently writing a report for a new Archival Facility to be integrated into a new building in Coburg. The Archives is currently 90% full and Abigail and her team are looking at ways to expand services and move the Archives forward.
- **Gillian Shaw:** Gillian advised that she had also returned from a maternity leave in July and that the City of Vaughan Archives had been involved in several Canada 150 projects, including a physical exhibit and two online exhibits. She advised that Vaughan was currently working on finalizing its Remembrance Day Archival Exhibit and would be assisting with providing archival materials and information to the Pierre Berton Heritage Centre, due to open in the summer of 2018.

7. Adjournment

Gillian called for a motion to adjourn at 4:10 pm. Dana Thorne seconded the motion with no objections.

Minutes from the 2018 AGM

**Minutes
Municipal Archives Interest Group
Annual General Meeting
May 9, 2018
Region of Waterloo Archives – 20 Webster Street East
(Kitchener, Ontario)**

Executive Present:

- Brenda Hicock, Chair
- Gina Dewaele, Secretary-Treasurer

Executive Regrets:

- Gillian Shaw, Vice-Chair

Present:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ● Amanda Hill, Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County | ● Matthew Roth, Region of Waterloo Archives |
| ● Betty Jo Belton, Stratford-Perth Archives | ● Ellen Millar, Simcoe County Archives |
| ● Liz Mayville, County of Oxford Archives | ● Charlotte Woodley, Region of Waterloo Archives |
| ● Dana Thorne, Lambton County Archives | |

1. Call to Order

Brenda called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda for the afternoon was presented.

Motion to approve the Agenda: Ellen Millar

Seconded by: Liz Mayville

Carried.

3. Approval of the 2017 AGM Minutes

There were no omissions in the 2017 AGM Minutes.

Motion to approve the Minutes: Charlotte Woodley

Seconded by: Ellen Millar

Carried.

4. Report of the Chair

Brenda read out her report to members present. No comments were made.

5. 2017-2018 Financial Report

Brenda described the report to members. No comments were made. The 2017-2018 Financial Report and the 2018-2019 Budget were also presented:

2017-2018 Financial Report

REVENUE	
Amount previously in bank	\$624.00
Grant from AAO	\$250.00
TOTAL	\$874.00
EXPENSES	
2017-2018 Meetings	\$0.00 (in kind)
2017 Open House	\$233.72 (catering)
Advertising	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$233.72
FINAL BANK BALANCE	
	\$640.28

2018-2019 Budget

REVENUE	
Amount previously in bank	\$640.28
Grant from AAO	\$250.00
TOTAL	\$890.28
EXPENSES	
2018-2019 Meetings	\$0.00 (in kind)
2018 Open House	\$350.00 (catering)
Advertising	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$350.00
FINAL BANK BALANCE	
	\$540.28

Motion to approve the 2017-2018 Financial Report and 2018-2019 Budget: Amanda Hill
 Seconded by: Liz Mayville
 Carried.

6. 2017 Open House

The location of the 2018 MAIG Open House was discussed, and will be taking place at the Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County. The following other institutions also offered their facilities for future years:

- 2019: Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre
- 2020: City of Vaughan

7. Other Business

- a) Brenda announced that she would be stepping down as Chair and that Gillian would be stepping down as Vice Chair. Only two nominations had been received for the open executive positions, one for Chair (Gillian Shaw) and one for Vice Chair (Megan Lockhart).

Brenda brought forward a motion to name Gillian Shaw as the new MAIG Chair.

Motion to approve: Charlotte Woodley

Seconded by: Ellen Millar

Carried.

Brenda brought forward a motion to name Megan Lockhart as the new MAIG Vice Chair.

Motion to approve: Amanda Hill

Seconded by: Liz Mayville

Carried.

8. Roundtable:

- **Dana Thorne, Lambton County Archives:** Dana advised that there have been staff changes to the County Archives and that they now have a full-time Archives Assistant on staff. The archives is also hosting two summer students this summer who will be digitizing and transcribing the Sarnia Observer and Paisley Photograph Collection. Dana also advised that the archives had recently finished a major storage renovation and that staff had settled back in nicely.
- **Liz Mayville, County of Oxford Archives:** Liz advised that Megan Lockhart had started working at the County Archives in March and that staff were beginning to repatriate records. Liz explained that the County would be giving the archives an offsite storage facility for inactive records and that a company had been hired to conduct a space assessment. The archives have also been working on moving forward with social media, making their space more accessible and would be acquiring some records from the Archives of Ontario in the future.
- **Gina Dewaele, Elgin County Archives:** Gina discussed staffing at Elgin County and advised that two students from Young Canada Works would be starting in the summer. These students would be working to continue the digitization project of the St. Thomas Times-Journal Prints, as well as a large accession from 2015 of negatives from the 1970s-2000s. The archives anticipates the students work will provide an additional 10,000 accessible photographs and captions on the Archives' online database. Gina also advised that Elgin County had recently completed several digitization projects including the Thomas Talbot fonds and the Ministry of Natural Resources fonds, and that staff were currently working on adding thousands of more photos to their online database and social media channels. To this day, the archives have had over 6 million views on Flickr, 1700 followers on Facebook, 1500 followers of Twitter and have 230 followers on their recently created Instagram account.

- **Charlotte Woodley, Region of Waterloo Archives:** Charlotte advised that she had been asked to help with Anniversary projects within the Region and that the archives were having some digital asset management problems with their film and images. She also advised that the Laurier School of Social Work had become interested in the House of Industry and Refuge fonds, and that she was trying to discover more about the history of this. Subsequently, an online museum about the house has been created and many of these records have been transcribed.
- **Betty Jo Belton, Stratford Perth Archives:** Betty Jo advised that the archives were back to a full staff complement as of October 2017 and that a bit of restructuring was occurring at the County. The archives have switched to summer hours and have recently purchased a WAV lift to help with records retrievals.
- **Ellen Millar, Simcoe County Archives:** Ellen advised that for the past two years the archives had gone without a full staff complement, however this has now been rectified. Jenn Heddleston is currently working on archival backlog and the archives is working to improve their processes. The archives monthly blog is going well and they were recently featured on Breakfast Television. She also advised that a new retention schedule had been implemented.
- **Amanda Hill, Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County:** Amanda advised that the archives had been in their new space for around two years now and that a Young Canada Works student would be joining staff in the summer. She also advised that a local television station had begun running a series called “Out of the Vault” which was providing more awareness of the archives and its collection.
- **Brenda Hicock, City of Vaughan Archives:** Brenda advised that the City had implemented a new retentions schedule last year and that staff were undertaking a review of existing records. The Vaughan website had also going through a recent revamp, which allowed for archives staff to redesign and update the existing website and virtual exhibitions. She advised that archives staff had also been asked to assist with the Municipal Election in October and that almost all of the City’s Council Agendas, Minutes and By-Laws had been digitized.

9. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Did You Know?

- The Municipal Archives Interest Group was formed in 1994 and represent municipal archivists, institutions and individuals interested in the preservation and use of municipal and other community based records in Ontario
- MAIG members represent 26% of the AAO Membership
- Over 50 Ontario municipal institutions are AAO Members

The Brighton Barn Project - Preserving Brighton's Agricultural Heritage

Catherine Stutt - Archives Volunteer, Brighton Digital Archives

Photos courtesy of Brighton Digital Archives

The sight of an old barn, weathered from countless storms, baked grey and faded by the sun, roofs sagging, and foundations sinking, is enough to catch the eye of even the most amateur photographer. Barns are rural architecture, rural industrial sites, and yet they represent so much more – a way of life handed down from generation to generation, a conquest of the surrounding land, a haven for livestock. While the Brighton area is known for its healthy agricultural-based economy, family farms and the iconic timber frame barns no longer dot the landscape as they once did.

“Anecdotally, there are probably 10 barns lost for every barn left standing,” shared D.W. (Fletch) Fletcher, who suggested a project designed to preserve and share these treasured buildings in a digital format. It would become part of a rapidly growing online presence, showcasing Brighton's history and heritage.



Built circa 1903, Bud and Jill Guertin's barn is beautifully maintained, and until recently was home to Breakaway Antiques, named for the tragic 1852 flood that swept through the property.

In late 2015, Fletch, his wife Dorothy, Ralph de Jonge, and the author of this article banded together to form the Brighton Digital Archives (BDA). Absent for storage space of physical artifacts, the group dedicated its efforts toward populating a professional website, (<http://vitacollections.ca/brightonarchives>), with photos and documents from the community. Brighton has a core group of talented historians willing to share their work and resources, which helped with acquiring material. With a series of intake sessions and participation in the History Open House each February, community outreach resulted in an excellent response.

The Brighton Barn Project, launched in 2017, required a completely different approach. Instead of scanning existing photos, the group had to create original content, and work quickly before more barns were lost to wind, weather, fire, and logistics.

“We came across a wonderful photo of a barn raising,” explained Fletch. “We are so fortunate to be able to share these photos through our digital archives, to give them relevance again.” Referring to the very popular Latimer Collection – two albums of almost 460 photos from 1929 to 1941 of visitors to the Latimer General Store in Orland – Fletch felt the barns should have the same treatment. “We can photograph them, investigate their history and heritage, and tie them to the farm families of our area. We can do for barns what we did for the Latimer photos.”



“In 1905, Hugh McColl’s barn raising brought together friends, neighbours, and family from miles around. More than 100 people worked together and by the end of the day the barn was erected at the cost of a handshake and the understanding the favour would be returned without hesitation.” Source [Brighton Township](#) by Florence Chatten.

From the outset, support was obvious. Fletch spoke with a group of farmers who are in the process of collecting artifacts and anecdotes about the local farming community and they quickly endorsed this project and offered assistance. “Every single farmer with whom I spoke is pleased we’re doing this. Through them, we received information about a barn about to be dismantled, and we were able to photograph it before it came down. That was a great start.”

The initial estimate of the number of barns was a bit low. Before long, a guess of 50 to 70 barns quickly rose to more than 200, taking the project into a second summer of photography.

“We were surprised by the number,” admitted Fletch. “We’re pretty confident we now have the lion’s share identified. Along the way we’ve had great conversations with farmers and learned a lot about these buildings we take for granted.”

Fletch also learned a bit about construction. “There are several L-shaped barns in the area, and I always thought that was just the way they were built. Turns out, in most cases, farmers of the past have moved one barn from another location and attached it to an existing barn.”

Recording and researching all this is part of the long-range plan, one with a life of its own. After identifying the properties, the BDA sent an introductory letter assuring landowners and farmers that volunteer photographers would only come on their property with permission; the response was excellent. More than a dozen volunteer photographers were recruited from the Brighton Photo Group and given specifications for the photos. “We wanted consistent high-quality images for the gallery, and we’re happy to supply the barn owners with digital copies at no cost,” said Fletch. “We only want exterior photos, so this is not at all disruptive, and the photographers coordinate visits with the owners.”



Photographers from the Brighton Photo Group with their photos used in the 2018 Brighton Barn Calendar. Left to right: Bill Murtha, Bill Sprung, Gilles Bisson, George Wand, Ralph de Jonge, Dalila Seckar, Cindy Conlin, Tim Whitehouse, D.W. Fletcher.

Once photography is complete on a barn, the group adds ownership and structural details and posts the information on its website. A new phase will involve researching the history of the property, ascertaining when it was built, by whom, and how it was used over the generations. “This is more than just photos; it’s a history of the farm,” said Fletch.

This undertaking is only the first phase. “Once we get the current barns identified, photographed, and researched, we hope to start learning about those barns no longer standing. We hope people come forth with photos of old barns in the community and share their stories. If there is one barn left for every 10 gone, then we have upwards of 2,000 barns once standing in Brighton.”

“On Goodfellow Road there are four families who make their living by farming,” said Fletch. “A hundred years ago, there were probably 25 or 30 farms, each with a barn and a house and family. They are gone, but not forgotten. They are part of the fabric of our agricultural history and heritage. When we’re finished, we hope to present an impressive gallery of elegant buildings along with their stories.”

With more than 200 volunteers involved in the project, from farmers to photographers to researchers, it has gathered considerable attention. Last autumn, with funding from the Brighton Heritage Advisory Committee, the BDA published the 2018 Brighton Barn Calendar. More than 1,000 copies were printed, and in high demand, reflecting the interest and support shown by the entire community.

“The Barn Project, led by the BDA team and supported by volunteer photographers, represents yet another great community initiative,” said Brighton’s Mayor Mark Walas. “The Municipality of Brighton is a unique blend of a rural and urban living. The barn project brings further awareness to our local heritage and we commend the continued efforts of our volunteers in showcasing our community.”



This charming 1901 barn on Goodfellow Road was a calendar favourite.

From the outset, the BDA knew this would be a popular project. Everyone loves a barn, but the response from the Brighton community, and across the country was overwhelming, with people sharing personal stories and histories of the properties. From an archival standpoint, it’s a textbook example of a community working together, sharing a love of history, heritage, agricultural architecture, and farm life, and building a collection from that combined effort.

“The Brighton Barn Project is a touchstone for community outreach done right,” shared Abigail Miller of Northumberland County Archives. “The volunteers at the BDA consistently push the boundaries of what’s possible for a small volunteer organization by engaging with the right people at the right time. The success of the Brighton Barn Project is only one of many testaments to their ability to effectively identify worthy projects, communicate their vision with infectious passion and good humour, and produce exceptional results. The BDA’s dedication to quality and professionalism ensures their valuable work will have a major impact on the understanding of our region’s heritage and culture for generations to come.”

Time Travel with Elgin County Archives

Amber Mandich – Archivist Assistant, Elgin County Archives

Over the past year, Elgin County Archives has been redeveloping our outreach strategy to increase our presence in the local community and to ensure we are delivering on our mission to serve as a total community resource. It is important to us that community members perceive us as approachable and feel welcome in our space. Outreach is a key tool that allows us to engage with our target audience, facilitating new connections with potential users while maintaining relationships with existing users.

In October 2017, we launched *Time Travel with Elgin County Archives*, an outreach program that uses green screen technology to photograph participants and superimpose them into historical photographs to make it appear as if they are traveling back in time. The idea of the program is to capture the interest of community members by offering a stimulating and creative activity, and then engaging in conversation with them to bring awareness to our collections and resources.

The program was implemented in partnership with the Elgin County Library, and this partnership has been invaluable to the success of the program. The county's public library system has ten branches situated at the heart of the rural communities of Elgin County, and each branch has an established user base that regularly attends library programming. This allowed us to cross-promote the event and provided us with an engaged audience to which we could bring our activity.



Example of one of the many photographs participants receive.

Generally, we hold a two to three-hour drop-in session where we offer a selection of six photographs from our collection. For each branch we visit, we choose images that reflect its community's past and resonate with our participants, who may have memories of the event, place or people in the photograph. Once their photograph is taken using the green screen, we ask where they would like to be situated in the image and show them how the technology works. We then create

a photographic print for them using a mobile printer and, as the image is printing, we take the opportunity to start a conversation with them, bringing awareness to our services when it seems appropriate. We also offer to send them a digital copy of the image if they are willing to leave an email, and this gives us an opportunity to follow-up with participants after the event.

The program appeals to all ages and resonates with various demographic groups for different reasons. Younger demographics enjoy the technology and the idea that they are “time traveling”, and this offers us a unique opportunity to engage with a group that rarely visits us in person. This face-to-face interaction allows us to connect with our future users and hopefully ignite interest in local history. Older demographics reminisce about former streetscapes, buildings, and the people who used to live and work in their community. As they are selecting their photograph, the images often spark organic conversation, and this undoubtedly has intangible benefits in breaking down perceived barriers that may exist between archivist and researcher.

When we can, we try to keep the conversation going after the event to solidify our connection and put our resources directly into their inbox. If they requested a digital image, we follow up with a friendly email message thanking them for visiting us and inviting them to visit us in the future. We encourage them to follow us on social media, explore our online database, and reach out to us with any questions they might have about our services. This has led to donation offers, in-person visits and online reference requests.



Another sample photo from the community.

Some challenges with the program are the cost, the short interaction time with participants and the unknown longevity of the program. From selecting a photograph to handing over the photographic print, the total interaction time with each participant is around five minutes. While the interaction time is short, it is still significant, and first impressions are everything. We try to engage with everyone in a personal, exciting and fun way, so that their experience with the archives is positive and memorable.

We are also cognizant of the unknown longevity of the program – i.e. will the novelty wear off? Will people continue to attend the program after they have already experienced it? For now, it remains a popular activity but we are also looking at introducing programs where the green screen activity would be an element of a larger program rather than it being its own entity.

The equipment and supplies required for the program have an upfront cost of about \$1000, which may be a barrier for small archival institutions with limited budgets. This cost includes the green screen, professional photography lights, a mobile printer with Wi-Fi capability, a tablet and an application to create the green screen images on the tablet.

The green screen kit was purchased for \$160 and a portrait lighting set for \$190 from Henry's camera store. We also purchased the Canon SELPHY CP1300 printer for \$150, an Apple iPad 9.7 for \$430, and an application for iOS called "Green Screen by Do Ink" for \$2.99 in the App Store. Note that if you have a limited budget, the portrait lighting kit is optional. You may also opt for a tablet at a lower price point, and you may also use a mobile device. Once the equipment has been purchased, the only ongoing cost is the replacement ink and paper for the printer, which costs \$40 and yields 108 photographs.

The program has been very well-received within the community and continues to gain in popularity as we share the "time travel" images on our social media platforms after events. We have recently expanded the program beyond our partnership with the library to other cultural



Program participants standing in front of the green screen.

and community organizations, stimulating new collaborations, opportunities for cross-promotion, and the sharing of resources and outreach strategies. These bookings have resulted in a 600% increase of our outreach participation compared to the previous calendar year.

Creating more opportunities to be visible in the community has allowed us to make meaningful connections with community members who otherwise may not have interacted with us. The program has allowed us to increase awareness about archives in general, and about the resources and services we offer at Elgin County Archives. We hope to continue developing our outreach program and will be introducing genealogy and property research workshops in the fall. If you have any questions about the green screen program or are interested in discussing outreach in general, I would love to hear from you! Please reach out to me at amandich@elgin.ca or 519-631-1460, ext. 127.

Lambton County Archives and the Lost Village of Blue Water: 2017 Reunion

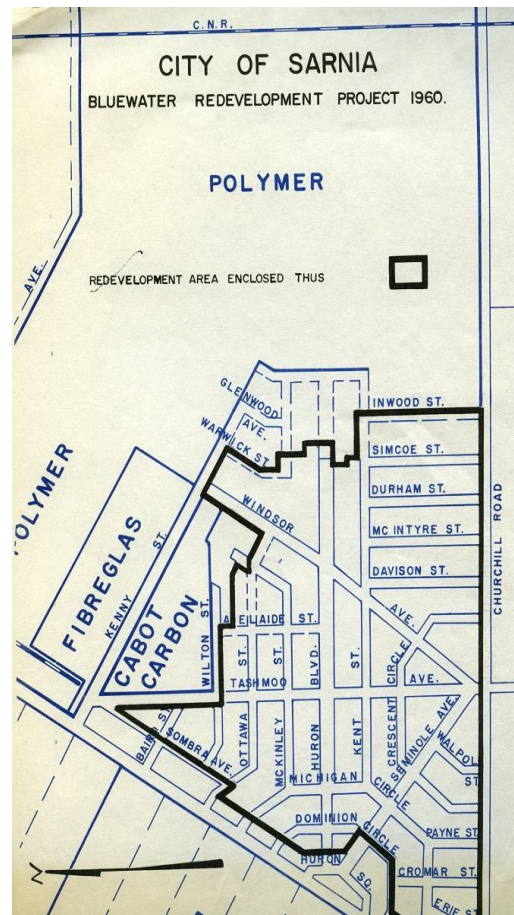
Colleen McLean - Archives Assistant, Lambton County Archives

On Saturday, August 12, 2017 I had the privilege of taking part in a wonderful outreach opportunity on behalf of the Lambton County Archives. It was the 75th anniversary celebration of the Village of Blue Water. Where is Blue Water? Well, Blue Water no longer exists on the map, but is still very much alive in the hearts of those people who at one time lived in the little village just beyond the gates of Polymer Corporation near Sarnia.

Polymer was created by the Federal Government in 1942 to make synthetic rubber when supplies from overseas were cut off during the Second World War. Workers came from all over the country and the world to work at Polymer.

When the workers first arrived their housing options were limited. Polymer had made a bunk house on their property and one of the local merchants filled the second floor of his building with cots for short-term housing. It was a lonely existence for many of the workers who missed being away from their families. After local real estate agent Archie McIntyre arranged for the sale of lots across from Polymer, the little village of Blue Water came to be.

Unfortunately, living conditions were poor in Blue Water, with problematic roads, insufficient septic systems, and issues with the water supply. This did not hinder the spirit of the community of Blue Water. However, as time went on it was determined that health and safety issues related to Blue Water's infrastructure problem were too serious, and the village was no longer sustainable. The village of Blue Water was literally torn apart and moved house-by-house to different parts of Lambton County.



*Blue Water Redevelopment Map -
Lambton County Archives Collection,
9KA-1.*

August 12, 2017 was a wonderful celebration for former Blue Water residents. As people began to enter the gymnasium at the Centre Communautaire Francophone de Sarnia-Lambton, it was as if time had stood still and they were children and teenagers again. The hall was full of conversation, laughter, and happiness.



Blue Water aerial photograph, from Lorraine (Mayer) Williams's "A Walk Through the Village of Blue Water, Ontario"

Water and the spirited multicultural residents that made it come to life.

As a result of one of my conversations with an amateur historian at the Blue Water reunion, several weeks later we received a significant donation of material that he had gathered about the lost village, including photographs, maps, newspaper clippings, and lists of residents.

I was able to speak with most of the attendees as they approached the display I had brought from the Lambton County Archives, and most of them had a story to tell. One gentleman told me he had made a special trip from Montreal to play in the band that night (which, by the way, was wonderful). As each shared a story, little by little I felt like I was a part of their community.

The hall was beautifully decorated, each table had centerpieces of antiques such as typewriters or bottled pop. There were displays around the room and on the walls. There were enormous amounts of delicious food and a beautiful cake featuring a depiction of Blue Water.

As I looked out over the hall as the evening drew to a close, and guests said their goodbyes and took their leave, I wondered how many people did not know about a little village named Blue

The Peel Archives Blog: A Small Blog with a Large Reach

Samantha Thompson - Archivist, Region of Peel Archives at PAMA (Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives)

Three years ago the Region of Peel Archives launched a blog, both as an outreach experiment and as a contribution to Archives Awareness Week in the province. We've been pleasantly surprised by the influence and geographical reach of the blog, simply named "Archives @ PAMA" (found at <https://peelarchivesblog.com/>). We have accumulated 89,000 views in over 180 countries and our posts are linked to and recommended by a range of institutions and interested users. Here we offer some reflections on our experience so far.



Homepage of the Region of Peel Archives' blog.

Impetus and style

The initial motivation for the blog was partly to expedite reference services. We are a small archives team contending with big-archives demands: we maintain public and private records for two of Canada's largest cities (Mississauga and Brampton), a complex second-tier municipality (the Region of Peel), and a large rural town (the Town of Caledon). A very busy reference service keeps us largely tied to the Reading Room. As well, reference often involves repeatedly answering some of the same or similar questions, not only about (say) property or family research, but also about what the archives and archives staff do in the first place: often users of municipal archives

tend to be neophytes in the archives world. Many – whether government employees or local residents – are encountering an archives for the first time while trying to solve a practical problem. It’s up to us to show what else we have to offer.

We wanted a flexible way to share overviews of common types of research, highlights from our collections, and down-to-earth accounts of what archivists do. For various reasons our website was not a natural host for this content. Because we already had a strong social media platform, we decided on a WordPress.com blog which could be promoted via that platform. Early on we settled on some stylistic choices that may have aided our blog’s popularity. They include:

- **Use of plain language and an informal tone.** Many of our users find archives intimidating at first. We avoid unexplained jargon and unfold important concepts in a friendly way with plenty of examples. To more easily reach people, we also give our posts straightforward titles that echo questions they might type into search engines.

- **Respect for individuality.** We decided not to write as “the archives” or as “staff” but under our own names. This underscores the fact that real people steward primary resources. Likewise, we decided against a homogenous writing style across the blog but instead retained our own voices. We believe that people who better appreciate archival labour will make better researchers and supporters of archives.



Peel Archives bloggers: Nick Moreau, Samantha Thompson, and Kyle Neill.

- **Revealing the universal in the particular.** We try to bring out the elements of stories which have something to say to a wide range of people. When writing about historical topics, we also put the historical records in our care front and centre. We then generally try to show what these records say about archives more broadly.

Rewards

The initial success of the blog consisted in our ability to respond to some reference inquiries using a single link to posts about commonly used holdings. This saved us time. As we expanded our efforts into a series on what archivists do, we began to attract attention as a reliable one-stop source for introductions to archival basics. The following have been rewarding results:

- **The blog has become a learning resource** used by information schools, universities, and colleges in Canada, the US, the UK, and beyond. Our referral statistics tell us that our posts are included on formal curricula (unfortunately some links are on intranets so we can't see further detail); we have also received emails and comments that let us know the way courses and programs are using the blog. The search phrases by which people find us through Google also indicate that we're reaching people in archival studies.
- **The blog is reaching an international readership.** Readers from the United States lead our statistics followed by commonwealth countries, and then Europe. We're very glad to have many readers from non-Western countries, such as African, Middle Eastern, and East Asian countries, and notably the Philippines (where we are used in Open University sources). It's gratifying to see the name of our institution – PAMA (the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives) -- referenced in the midst of Italian, Greek, or French text on the internet.
- **The blog allows staff to contribute to and participate in the archival community.** It can be tough for municipal archivists in particular to access scholarly resources, travel extensively to conferences, and carve out dedicated time for original research. Writing, researching, and responding to comments on the blog has given staff a creative outlet and basis for engagement with archivists around the world.

Challenges

Our blog has also confronted us with challenges:

- **Managing time.** Long-time readers will have noted that the frequency of our postings has dwindled somewhat since inception (as long as we keep quality high we aren't too worried by this). We have found that blogging (and simply uploading and optimizing posts) takes longer than we thought. Our managers encourage us to spend work time as we're able on this project; however, all staff admit to spending voluntary time on posts, a practice which we can't commend to others.

- **Chasing statistics.** We've found that, as with social media, it's easy to become tempted by numbers for their own sake as a measure of success. We remind ourselves that even if a less "popular" post reaches only one reader and helps someone learn something, that's enough. Indeed some of our collection highlights posts have resulted in research inquiries into those collections, even from overseas.
- **Preaching to the choir.** Some of our posts have been widely shared by archivists themselves. Posts such as [Why don't archivists digitize everything?](#) and [What do archivists keep \(or not\)?](#) address "pain points" for the profession: questions we all get all the time but that don't have simple answers. We hope and trust that by kindly sharing these posts, archivists are helping us to reach the public even more than we know, as that is our primary target.
- **Doing maintenance.** Any content that we put out on the internet needs to have one eye kept on it. For instance, we try to respond to all sincere comments on the blog. We monitor the built-in statistics reports provided by WordPress to track views and referrals. We also occasionally do Google and social media searches to find out who is using our content. This practice revealed we once had the dubious distinction of being plagiarized word-for-word—without attribution—by a senior-level archivist outside Canada. This post has since been taken down.

We hope that this back-end view of blogging is helpful to other archives, just as we hope that the behind-the-scenes view of archives in our blog continues to support the profession and those it serves. Outreach for municipal archives can show the world that the practical magic of archives applies to us as well. Readers' comments like these warm our hearts:

Catherine Hainstock September 1, 2015 at 5:02 am · [Reply](#) →

I just wanted to thank you for posting this series. Understanding the 'ways' of archivists has really helped improve my ability to search through online records. Really enjoying the read.

Claude April 7, 2018 at 2:41 am · [Reply](#) →

I am so happy to have found this blog. I enjoy reading the posts very much and have even cited one of the posts for a class blog recently. I seem to find words in these articles that make me stop and appreciate archives and records management more than I already do.

My pick today is "the judgement of archivists will help determine how the future views the past".
No pressure.

Cheers

Outreach at Trent Valley Archives

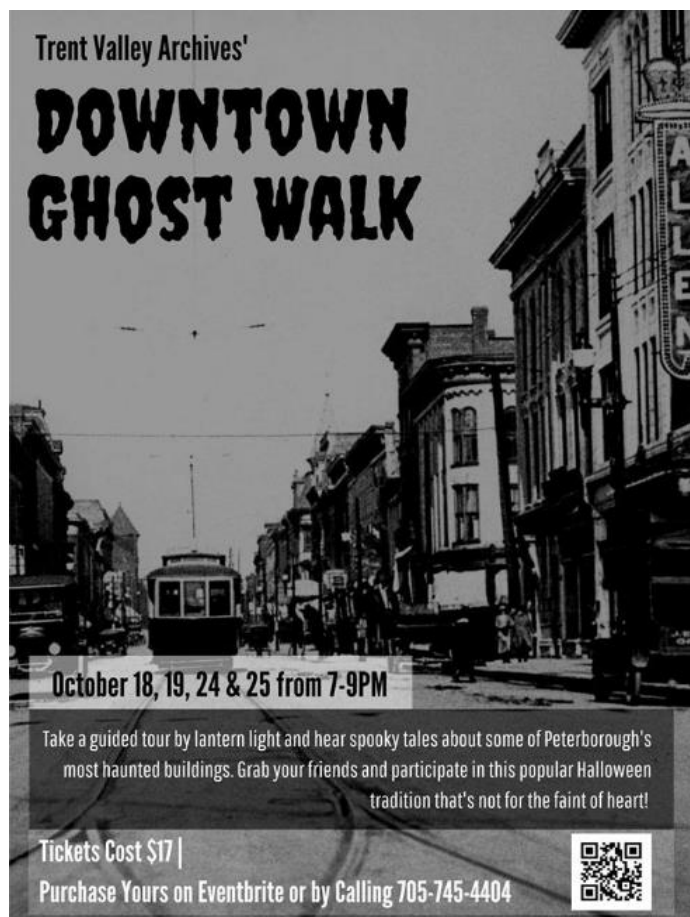
Heather Aiton Landry - Associate Archivist, Trent Valley Archives

Trent Valley Archives (TVA) is unusual in that much of the funding that keeps us running comes from outreach events. As we are not consistently funded by any level of government or any other outside organization, we have had to fund ourselves creatively through membership fees, sales, grants and appeals for donations in order to keep our archival material (700 fonds and counting) accessible to researchers. Through a variety of tours and events, we have been very successful in generating interest in local history, archival source material, and continuing to keep our doors open five days a week.

Our operation was completely volunteer-run from our incorporation in 1989 until we hired our first staff person in 2003. At that point, we started to run tours of downtown Peterborough and Little Lake Cemetery for the joint purpose of retaining our only full-time paid employee as well as educating the wider community about Peterborough history.

Our earliest tour, the Halloween Downtown Ghost Walk, continues to be one of our most popular outreach events. During the weeks prior to Halloween, volunteer tour guides take groups of about 20 people through the streets of downtown Peterborough by lantern light. They tell stories of the early days of the city and county while focusing on tragic and unexplained events. We always relate the stories to the source materials held by TVA which range from newspaper accounts and photographs to oral histories.

Another ghost tour of the eastern section of the city, Eerie Ashburnham, soon followed, and other not-so-haunted tours of different parts of Peterborough (including the Avenues, Peterborough's first designated heritage district) also



2018 Downtown Ghost Walk publicity poster.

gained a sizeable following. Tours of Little Lake Cemetery were also written and led by volunteer guides. Cemetery tours focus on a variety of themes; “Movers and Shakers” tells the stories of some of the prominent men and women who built this city as we know it today; “Tragic Tales” speaks to untimely or accidental local deaths. Our cemetery tours often lead groups to discussions about workplace safety, early medical treatment, women’s issues through history, and other topics. Those who like to imbibe occasionally enjoy the Scandals and Scoundrels Pub Crawl which takes visitors inside three historic pubs and provides an overview of drinking and tavern culture in the early days of Peterborough. A new tour on the roster this year, “Ballots, Booze and Bullets,” focuses on the prohibition era.

For those who prefer other modes of transportation, we also offer bike and bus tours. This year’s bus tour is going to the United Empire Loyalist Centre in Adolphustown, and past bus tours have centred on themes including Robertson Davies and Catharine Parr Traill. Bike tours follow the old rail trail that winds through Peterborough and where various industries once thrived.



Volunteers telling the story of Peterborough’s strongman Daniel McDonald at the 2017 Pageant.

Our major outreach event in terms of research, production, volunteer hours and people reached is the Little Lake Cemetery Pageant. This outdoor theatre event has run every year since 2009 in partnership with Little Lake Cemetery, when it was part of the celebration that marked the 150th anniversary of its founding. Currently, the event runs during the last weekend of September-- we used to run it in October, closer to Halloween, but too many

evenings of sleet and drizzle caused us to shift the date and the focus. Tour guides lead groups of about 20 on a planned route through the cemetery and watch, at various stops, costumed local actors portray events in the lives of now-deceased citizens of Peterborough at their gravesites. We tell stories of people from all walks of life, meticulously researched using sources that can be found at TVA as well as other museums and archives. Some of our past characters have been philanthropists, war veterans, jail inmates, pioneers, farmers, engineers, lumber barons, nurses, and artists. The tour ends at the cemetery chapel where refreshments (compliments of Tim Hortons) are served to the accompaniment of live music.

The tours not only generate interest in local history; they also generate interest in our archives. Each tour comes with a book of photographs related to the buildings and people whose stories we tell, and that will often bring tour participants into the archives looking for other historical photographs. Sometimes a tour participant will hear a story of a relative on a tour, and that will also bring them to the archives looking for more information.

We charge admission for our tours—currently, the fee ranges from \$17 for most of our walking tours to \$60 for a seat on a bus tour—so that we can fund the work that we do. We don't run every tour every year—at this point, there aren't enough weeks in the season or volunteer guides on hand to run all the tours we could offer—but most are available by request for groups of 15 or more for a reasonable flat rate, even if they are not part of the regular schedule of events in any given year. Sure, we need the money, but it has always been of paramount importance to Trent Valley Archives for our tours and events to promote the preservation and care of archives and cultivate a wider appreciation for and knowledge of Peterborough's past.



DESCRIPTION

Trent Valley Archives and historian Karen Carter-Edwards team up this year to present their new tour at Little Lake Cemetery entitled "Movers and Shakers".

Take a leisurely walk through the cemetery while learning something of the history of the Peterborough area through those of energetic demeanor who initiated change and influenced events.

You'll learn about residents such as early settlers Thomas A. & Frances (Browne) Stewart, Judge Harry Deyman, who heard the fraud case against Harold Ballard, Toronto Maple Leafs owner and J.J. Turner, former mayor, early entrepreneur & community advocate. Many others influential in politics, business and the arts will round out your tour, helping you understand what makes Peterborough the centre it is today.

DATE AND TIME

Sun, 12 August 2018
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM EDT
[Add to Calendar](#)

LOCATION

Little Lake Cemetery (meet outside the Chapel)
915 Haggart St
Peterborough, ON K9J 2Y1
[View Map](#)

Example of a previous Walking Tour through Little Lake Cemetery

2018 MAIG Open House Details

This year we are excited to announce that the MAIG Open House will be taking place in September in Belleville! Please join us and our gracious hosts Amanda Hill (Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County) and Rona Rustige (Glanmore National Historic Site Museum) as we tour the City and learn more about the Community Archives and its collection. Lunch and lively archival conversation will be provided, so we hope you will be able to join us!

When: Friday September 21st, 2018- 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Where: [Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County](#)
(254 Pinnacle Drive – Belleville, ON K8N 3B1)

Agenda: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm • Welcome and Tour of the Community Archives (and weather permitting downtown Belleville)

12:00 – 1:00 pm • Lunch

1:00 – 2:30 pm • Tour of Glanmore National Historic Site

2:30 – 4:00 pm • MAIG Meeting

Don't forget to register for this year's Open House! **Please RSVP by Friday September 14th** to: Gina Dewaele, MAIG Secretary-Treasurer: gdewaele@elgin.ca or call 519-631-1460 ext. 154.

