

President's Report

Arnprior & McNab/Braeside Archives – AGM April 15, 2023

With our last two annual meetings via Zoom, it is a pleasure to meet face to face for this AGM – especially on this, our 30th anniversary.

This last year has been a fluid and flexible year. For the first half of 2022, Brian Gilhuly continued as President – until our AGM last June. When our Treasurer resigned at that time, Brian became Treasurer while I returned as President.

2022 saw our archivist time increased from 3 days to 4.5 days/week. This has allowed our archivist to keep up with day-to-day activities, as well as begin to process the backlog of acquired collections. Our gratitude to both the Town of Arnprior and Township of McNab/Braeside for providing funding to allow this to happen. The Archives would not be the 1st class archives it is today without their financial and full support. It is much appreciated.

In January 2022, our updated strategic plan was approved. You can find it on our website under “About Us”

In February, our Archivist Kristen Mercier resigned. Although we were very sorry to see her leave, fortunately Emma Carey, our previous archivist, had just returned to the area and was willing to come back.

Because of the archivist turnover, it was decided not to apply for any grants for projects, other than requesting a summer intern. Marc, our intern, dealt with our backlog of digitized images, with more than 1,000 images added to our website for viewing. During his time, it was noticed one of our photo collections was deteriorating quickly. Marc was able to digitize the collection of 500 negatives and they too are now available on our website.

In August, we had a very special event to honour the late Peter Hessel, the founder of our Archives. Our reading room has been renamed the ‘Peter Hessel Room.’

In the fall, a facility was added to our website to show the archival hierarchy of a collection, so that one can easily see a list of all the records within a collection, how they fit together, and gives the ability to easily navigate to another record within the collection. We have slowly started to utilize this improvement, as there is work behind the scenes to set this up. Only a few

collections have been completed to date, one of which is the Peter Hessel collection. Hopefully, most will be completed by the end of this year.

Throughout the year, information has been provided through our blog and social media, as we continue to promote the Archives and its relevance to today's society. The series have been very well received, such as the "Inside the Vault", the "Archives A-Z", and the 'Graveside Stores'. A number of our posts have been reposted by other significant organizations such as the 'vinegar syndrome' reposted by the Ontario Archives.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect us. The archives has been open to visitors for most of the year, although it continues to be by appointment. The number of visitors and information requests is down from previous years, but I suspect our much-improved online presence during the pandemic is allowing people to browse and conduct their own research.

Our dedicated volunteers continue to be busy behind the scenes working on their many projects. Unfortunately, I cannot list the specific projects here as I am sure I will forget some. Some of the roles include assisting people with research, sorting collections, data entry, scanning images, reviewing documents, working on special projects, providing technical support, writing blogs, setting up displays at events, and attending board meetings.

The list of our volunteers in 2022 is on the back of your program. Although the number of volunteers has been reduced in the last few years from the previous 30 and the volunteer hours have decreased by half from about 3,000 in 2019, our volunteer base remains strong. As I have said before, they are our most valuable asset and the archives could not exist without them. They give their time and energy freely to preserve and make available our history.

To our Volunteers: Thank you. Thank you for your dedication: your time, your talents, your energy.

If anyone here is interested in volunteering, please talk to Emma, myself, or any volunteer here. There are a variety of jobs available, including an IT expert to look after our PCs and network. If you know of such a person, please let us know.

So what does the future hold for the archives?

- We will continue to celebrate our 30th anniversary through the year with a few more activities.

- We will be supporting the Township of McNab/Braeside as they celebrate the 200th anniversary of the arrival of Laird McNab in the next few years.
- And the Board will be concentrating on becoming compliant with the newly enacted Ontario Not-for-Profit Act (ONCA) by updating bylaws and procedures. This is to be completed in 2024 and will not be an easy job.

In closing I want to again thank our two municipalities, Arnprior and McNab/Braeside, as they continue to provide strong support. We could not survive without them.

Thank you to the Board members, with special thanks to Brian Gilhuly for agreeing to step in as Treasurer and Sara MacKenzie as Secretary.

Thank you to Diane Bresson, our Administrator, and archivist Emma for their help, regardless of what I threw at them.

Thank you.

Irene Robillard
President

April 15, 2023