

# **Report to Council from the Former Friends of the North Huron Museum**

## **Introduction**

The Friends of North Huron Museum originated in the spring of 2009 from a flyer added to the tax notices. It requested interested citizens to meet with Connie Goodall to form a volunteer group to help at the Museum.

About six volunteers attended the initial meeting. At that time the Museum had been closed for about three years after the departure of Curator, Jodi Jerome. During that time there were problems with a leaking roof causing extensive water damage on the third floor that eventually resulted in two second floor ceilings collapsing onto the permanent exhibits below.

Adding to the chaos were dozens of uncatalogued artifacts that had been accepted during that period of time, that were randomly stored in the second floor hallway.

Our mandate, along with municipal funding for repairs, (new ceilings, dry wall, paint and floor refinishing) was to bring the second floor exhibits back to life for public viewing. The task was daunting and yet exciting.

The volunteers met once a week for the better part of two years. The list of tasks accomplished was lengthy!

By 2011 the second floor of the museum was ready for the public. We then set our sights on creating a working office, improving archival organization, and attempting to clean up the artifacts stored on third floor. It was often a very dirty job.

As we neared the end of our mandated tasks our focus changed. Programming, fundraising, publicity, promotion, and creating partnerships became priorities.

Our annual events (Edwardian Tea, Family Day and seasonal activities) were initiated with attendance growing each year. We also created five year plans that allowed the Friends of the North Huron Museum and municipal staff to co-ordinate yearly goals.

By 2016 the Friends began to realize that the museum building was causing us concerns that made our efforts ever more challenging. There was also little support from the municipality. We grew tired and frustrated.

We have worked diligently to create a working museum with both permanent and temporary exhibits. Comments from townspeople and visitors from all over the world have been very positive.

We realize that maintaining the museum in its present form in this Edwardian building that is an historic, artifact on its own, may be impossible. This is an opportunity to envision a new and different museum, to evolve, grow, downsize or change its mandate. Could it be a specialty museum; Alice Munro and other local artistic celebrities? Could it become an archival museum associated with the Alice Munro Library or other building? There are many other options.

Since the 1970's, three generations residents from Wingham and area have trusted the museum to house important documents, artifacts and priceless photographs. These items preserve the history of the area from pioneer days to the present. We need to honour their trust.

As former Friends of the North Huron Museum, we feel that the Township of North Huron will be doing a great disservice to the historic fabric of this area, the last area to be settled in southern Ontario, by not recognizing the great value in preserving our past. That is the core principle of any museum!

## **The North Huron Museum: A Museum? Display? Exhibit? Collection?**

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines “museum” as: “A building used for storing, preserving and exhibiting objects considered to be of lasting historical, scientific or cultural interest.”

The North Huron Museum houses a collection of artifacts and archival items some of which are on permanent exhibit and others used in temporary displays.

The first floor Settlement Room features both permanent and temporary exhibits. The second floor rooms, with the exception of the Archive Room, comprise a permanent exhibition of artifacts significant to Wingham’s past. Each room’s exhibit showcases a specific aspect of the town’s heritage i.e. medical, police and military, industrial, CKNX Radio and Television.

Of special note is the first floor exhibit dedicated to the life and work of Nobel Literature Laureate, Alice Munro that has drawn visitors from across Canada and the world.

### **Overview of Activities Presented from 2009 – 2016**

#### **Permanent North Huron Museum Exhibits**

- 2009-2011 – Restoring and updating established permanent exhibits following repairs.
  - Medical Room,
  - Military and Police Room
  - Industrial Room
  - CKNX Media Room
  - Archives Room
- 2011- 2016 – New Permanent Exhibits
  - Post Office History
  - General Store
  - Settlement Room featuring history of Wingham, Blyth and East Wawanosh
  - The bird carvings of George Allan (the first donated collection to the museum)
  - Alice Munro Room
  - Harry J. Boyle celebrated author and broadcaster
  - George Agnew Reid internationally renowned artist and educator
  - Local Sports Memorabilia
  - Local Maps including a very early survey map of Wingham and the Maitland River
  - First Nations

- 2011- 2016 – Temporary Exhibits from the Museum Collections
  - Cameras and accessories
  - Glassware and pottery
  - Toys
  - Wingham souvenirs
  - Notary Seals
  - Women's hats and accessories
  - Salt cellars
  - Tobacco and Cigar boxes from N.D. Cameron collection
  - Shipwright tools
  - Antique Christmas decorations
  - Pioneer tools
  - Kitchenware

### **Special Events**

- Annual Edwardian Tea
- Yard Sale and BBQ Fundraisers
- Christmas at the Museum
- Halloween at the Museum
- Easter at the Museum
- Family Day Activities
- Canada Day Week
- Homecoming 2014 – 130 guests signed the guest book
- Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee, 2012
- Harry J. Boyle Exhibit Opening – 2015

### **Museum Partnerships**

- Reuben R. Sallows Gallery – photographic exhibit, 2011
- Festival of Lanterns
- Muskrat Festival
- Family Day at NHWCC
- Wingham Legion Remembrance Week – Jeff Hollenbeck Military Collection
- Horticultural Society
- Alice Munro Library – temporary exhibits in the library
- Alice Munro Festival
- Doors Open

### **School Programs**

- Experience My Community – Grade 1, 2013
- Rafting Down the Maitland- Our Pioneer Story – Grade 3, 2013- 2015
- Remembrance Day Week – Grade 10
- Assisted with Day Camp Summer Programs run by the Summer Student yearly

### **Submitted by:**

**Bill Farnell, Judy Lyons, Dixie Lee Arbuckle, Jackie Riggs and Verna Steffler.**