



Huron County Historical Society

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www.HuronCountyHistoricalSociety.ca

Newsletter October 2022

Executive for 2022-2023

David Armstrong	President	519-440-6206	Ralph Laviolette	Secretary-treasurer
Vicky Culbert	Past- president		Mac Campbell	Director
Elaine Snell	Membership	519-440-6206	James White	Director
Mary Gregg	Director	519-524-9372	Susan Glousher	Director
Rhea Hamilton- Seeger	Director	519-612-1201	Larry Mohring	Director
			Liz Sangster	Director

Our First Dinner and Speaker event!

Come join us at Kildonan House

Robert J. Clark will be relating the history of Kildonan House, 71 Kirk Street, Clinton
Everyone welcome

7 p.m. October 19, 2022

ALSO Dinner at Kate's Station Restaurant

Hwy. 4 South of Clinton

Only 30 seats available

5:00 p.m. Meet and Greet

5:15 p.m. Roast Beef Dinner

7 p.m. Presentation at Kildonan

Tickets for dinner \$30 and can be booked with Mac Campbell at 519-524-7935



*Dedication of Memorial Cairn at Port Albert Airport – 1988
William Balkwill, Eugene McGee, Don Dickson, Allan Gibson and Rector Peter Baldwin. A History of West Ashfield*

From the Editor

October is municipal election month and not to be overlooked. It is a level of government that you see in action in your immediate community; there are no party politics, simply people who want to see their community flourish. We are fortunate in Huron to see elections in many of the municipalities, rather than acclaimed candidates. Among the candidates are a greater number of women. Women in history often participate in public life via their memberships in women's organizations and community action groups, voluntary organizations and other close to home groups, think Women's Institutes and IODE. Evidence shows women bring the skills, different perspectives, and structural and cultural difference to drive effective solutions.



Here are some pioneers in local politics: Jean Hetherington, *top right*, was the first woman councillor in Goderich in 1938; Minnie Noakes, for Hensall in 1958 and once the only woman on Huron County council, defeated in 1968; Helen Jermyn in Exeter and Marg Bennett in Wingham both in 1963; Milvena Erickson for Bayfield in 1973; Barbara Dunbar, Grey Township in 1972; Rowena Wallace, Tuckersmith and Florence McPhail of Hibbert, both firsts in 1985.

There are many more women who have taken up the role of local politician and yet we have many councils today with only men represented. Perhaps this year will be different. It does not matter who you vote for, simply remember to vote!

History Hero – Eugene McGee

A history hero is one who works quietly in the background, collecting, gathering and promoting our history. Eugene McGee is a Huron History Hero.

Eugene McGee is a Port Albert farm boy whose family in 1939 gave up 17 acres of their farmland to help accommodate the 402 acres in Port Albert required for the quick building in 1939 of the RAF Air Navigation School as part of the British Commonwealth program. It opened for use in October of 1940 and produced some 1,200 trained students.

Eugene was ten in 1939 and simply fell in love with everything about RAF Port Albert particularly the airplanes.

He left school at an early age and worked on the farm. At 22 he shipped out as a fireman on the Great Lakes freighters to see, as Eugene says chuckling “to see the world through a port hole!”

At 42 years of age he retired from sailing the Great Lakes and took up the next 20 years working underground in the Sifto Salt Mine, Goderich (the largest in the world). Amid all of this Eugene continued to collect and document the history, with photos and stories of Port Albert RAF, which culminated in his book, *History of Port Albert*, published in 1987.

In 1988 Eugene and Don Dickson spearheaded the installation of a cairn in Port Albert dedicated to Port Albert Number 31 School of Air Navigation base.

For many years Eugene resided in a tiny community near Port Albert known as Sheppardton and his home was a kind of RAF Port Albert museum, which later was moved intact to the Huron County Museum, Goderich, in 2010 as a important addition to the Second World War display.

Eugene is celebrating his 92nd birthday this month. Happy birthday Sir!

Membership renewal...

If you received this newsletter by mail, the date shown above your name on the address label is the year to which your membership is paid up, according to our records. Call Elaine Snell if you are not sure or need clarification. If you are in arrears, consider this a reminder that the membership fees are \$20. To reserve your member's hard copy of Historical Notes, keep your dues up to date.

Email us about using e-transfer. Copies of recent past Historical Notes are available please call 519-440-6206 (past copies are \$8 to \$10 per copy).

To access the **members-only** section for the Historical Notes or to do a search for names or places in the Historical Notes, go to www.HuronCountyHistoricalSociety.ca, open the dropdown menu for Publications, click HCHS Members Login. If you cannot get access using the password, then check if your web browser is up to date.

If the password is lost or not available readily, contact hchs1965@gmail.com or call 519-440-6206

Just an added note. The login password has been the same for a number of years and our web master suggested it was time for a change. So if you have not renewed and are having problems accessing the archives, please contact Elaine about renewing.

Where to get your local History Books

And back copies of The Historical Notes – Fincher's and The Book Peddler both of Goderich, North Huron Citizen in Blyth, The Book Barn off Hwy 86 between Wingham and Whitechurch, The Village Bookshop, Bayfield and Bayfield Archives.

Need a simple elegant gift?

For a special gift or simply a thoughtful card to send consider using cards featuring some of the iconic artwork of Jack McLaren. Call executive member Mary Gregg 519-524-9372 or check out Fincher's, and The Book Peddler in Goderich.



Transportation bus from Port Albert to Goderich, above left, and Anson Bomber, a familiar sight over the area during W.W.II. Photo courtesy of *Memories of Goderich*

Time off for trainers and fellow servicemen with local visitors. Photo courtesy of *Memories of Goderich*

A find from bygone days

We are still seeing evidence of the old Sunset Hotel popping up now and then. The hotel sat on the west end of Britannia and Picton Street West in Goderich. It had a long life, opening with a flourish in 1902 and attracting visitors from all over Canada and the U.S.A. It had its own vegetable garden out back and of course a burn barrel area for garbage. The hotel was dismantled in 1971 and the land developed into lots. One of those lots has their vegetable garden right about where the burn area was. The garden tiller sometimes turns up assorted bits of glass and metal, wee treasures. On this one day a man's razor surfaced. Imagine, over 50 years in the ground and still recognizable! Hard to say whether that is a good thing or not in light of how long our trash lasts today! For more info on the Sunset Hotel see Huron Historical Notes, Issue 2016

