



**Huron County Historical Society**  
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 Website: www.HuronCountyHistoricalSociety.ca



Executive for 2011-12

David Armstrong	president	519-524-1156	Rhea Hamilton-Seeger	councilor
Ralph Laviolette	secretary	519-565-2454	Brock Vodden	councilor
Mac Campbell	treasurer	519-524-7935	Pam Stanley	councilor
Ralph Laviolette	newsletter, Notes	519-565-2454		
Elaine Snell	membership	519-523-9531		

**Next Society Meeting.....**

**General Meeting, Wed, June 15, 2011**

**6:00pm: Legion Hall, Turnberry (Main) St,  
 Cty Rd 12, Brussels  
 Roast Beef dinner, \$16pp**

**7:00 pm: Visit Brussels Railway Station and  
 Optimist Clubhouse, North Turnberry  
 St., Brussels**

**7:15 pm: Visit the McNeil Nostalgia Collection  
 featuring autos and 50s mementos**

**Don McNeil's collection is in the Ament  
 Building, a concrete structure nearby dating  
 from 1904.**

Members, visitors and guests are welcome to attend the full session or the feature visits at 7:00 pm.

**Membership renewal....**

The date shown above your name on the address label is the year to which your membership is paid up, according to our records. If you are in arrears, consider this a reminder that the membership fees are now \$20.

To reserve your member's copy of Historical Notes, keep your dues up to date.

Past copies of the Notes are available at the Museum, \$8.00 per copy.

And, if you are in arrears, mail-in your membership today.

Note our current address for mail and memberships:  
**HCHS Memberships, Box 3, Goderich ON, N7A**

**At the last meeting.....**

On May 18, 2011, at the annual general meeting in Wroxeter, Jayne Thompson, Communications Co-ordinator at the Conservation Authority related the history of conservation measures and noteworthy events in the Maitland River basin as the MVCA celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The meeting acknowledged the resignations of Isobel Bissonnette and Ted Turner from council and welcomed Pam Stanley to join other returning council members for another year. It also conferred life membership to Ralph Laviolette, past president, secretary, bookkeeper, newsletter and Notes editor.

**Archives Facilities project.....**

Members will recall that in 2009, the Society undertook a project to make recommendations for a competent storage solution for the many public and private family and other collections in the County. The project began with recognition that there is not sufficient space in existing storage or display locations to house current collections.

Three tasks were identified:

- 1- To attain an archivist for Huron collections.
  - 2- To explore best practices for archival management in rural areas by visiting facilities in other counties and other venues.
  - 3- To determine, through surveys and personal contacts, the nature, scope and size of private and other collections in the County that do not now have or will soon not have, competent care and storage.
- The project is well underway, and is in the last phase. The Society plans to soon publish a set of recommendations that will serve Huron County for years to come.

### **Plaque project.....**

*The Society is continuing its plan to erect plaques commemorating noteworthy people and places across the County. If you have an idea of where and why to mount a plaque, call Mac Campbell or David Armstrong. A planning team has been organized. All suggestions will be seriously considered.*

### **Huron Historical Notes.....**

*The 2011 edition of Huron Historical Notes is underway. It will feature the story of the municipality of Morris Turnberry with Jodi Jerome synthesizing the recent publication of the definitive history of the area.*

*Contact Ralph Laviolette if you have time to volunteer time to help to produce the edition. If you have a suggested topic or an anecdote or article to contribute to the next Pot Pourri, email: [ralphlav@tcc.on.ca](mailto:ralphlav@tcc.on.ca).*

### **A touch of history for our visit with Don McNeil.....**

*In 1946, Jim McNeil purchased the Ament Mill building. In the 1800s, the original building on this site housed the Little Red Wagon Factory. It built butter boxes, butter presses, rocking chairs, wagons and woodworking. It was then owned by the Smith Brothers, producing rough lumber for the Toronto market.*

*John and Philip Ament bought the south part of the mill in 1893 and manufactured home trim and moldings. They used the house to the south as their showroom.*

*In 1903 or 1904, the mill burned, leaving only the south wall (the original bricks are still there). It was immediately replaced in 1904 by a cement building added to the brick wall that remained.*

*When Jim McNeil bought the property he started a Shell Service Station. Jim had served as an aircraft mechanic for the Royal Canadian Air Force. The McNeils served the community for over 35 years, providing fuel, oil changes and repairs. From 1947 to 1970, Austin, Rambler and Nash automobiles were sold here.*

*Jim McNeil retired in the early 1970s and leased the property to the Dominion Chain Company for seven years. The factory employed 10 people manufacturing cables, chain link ends, and control cables and ends shipped to Massey-Ferguson dealers.*

*Jim's son, **Don McNeil**, now owns the building where he stores his collectibles.*

*He has also operated McNeil's Autobody on Orchard Drive for over 60 years, marked by the 1926 Model T atop the pole. Here he restores antique and classic cars and specializes in collision and refinishing work.*

*Don still has the 1928 Model A he had as a young boy pumping gas at 32c/gallon. Don was part of the Historical Automobile Society of Canada, and visited antique car shows regularly. He has a 1936 Ford Truck used by Mickey Rooney in the movie *Black Stallion* and he also restored the vehicles used in a movie about Steven Truscott.*