



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Information, Heritage and Seniors Committee
From: Jana Burns, Wellington Place Administrator
Date: Wednesday, February 15, 2023
Subject: WCMA Update

Staff Update

The WCMA is pleased to welcome Aaron Cremasco to our Maintenance division. Aaron lives in Elora and is a certified electrician, bringing a wealth of experience, primarily in the HVAC and automotive industries. Albeit in a temporary role, we also welcome Zachary Wigglesworth, an intern from the Applied Museum Studies programme at Algonquin College to the curatorial team. Zachary will be with the division until April, working on a variety of conservation and collections management projects to hone his skills in these areas. Finally, Museum Technician Phil Dietrich has announced his retirement following 20 years of service. Phil has lent his expertise to creating award-winning exhibitions, facilitating the display of the fine art collection throughout the County, and working behind the scenes to ensure a good visitor experience. Prior to joining the WCMA team, Phil worked at the Royal Ontario Museum, the Seagram Museum, and the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery among others. His retirement is effective late February, and we wish him all the best.

Visitor Statistics

The two charts below are reflective of WCMA visitor numbers in 2019 and 2022, respectively. The intermediate years are excluded as the pandemic disrupted a great deal of normal activity. While the popular Dinosaurs exhibit considerably boosted visitation in 2022, school registrations were considerably lower and are only now beginning to return. Weekends at the WCMA are growing in popularity, as is attendance at WCMA hosted events. Rentals are not captured in the charts below as this data began to be collected in 2021. Of the approximately 300 bookings received by the WCMA each year, 200 are external (not County bookings), and bring further exposure to our site via meetings and celebrations. As our Action Plan notes, staff will focus on obtaining data to inform our decision making into the future.

TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITORS MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES 2019

TOTAL WEEKEND	TOTAL ANNUM	EXHIBIT OPENING	CLOSED	INCLEMENT WEATHER	GROUP PRGM ATTENDEES (SCHOOLS, WORKSHOPS, ETC)	BUS TOUR	EVENTS
5,144	15,957	8	14	3	3232	15	2712
32%					20%	0%	17%

TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITORS MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES 2022

TOTAL WEEKEND	TOTAL ANNUM	EXHIBIT OPENING	CLOSED	INCLEMENT WEATHER	GROUP PRGM ATTENDEES (SCHOOLS, WORKSHOPS, ETC)	BUS TOUR	EVENTS
18,321	39,127	2	38	5	1443	397	6496
48%					4%	1%	17%

Programming Update

The Christmas Season is traditionally followed by a slow period for programmes and outreach. Teachers and other groups tend to take stock of the new year and prepare for the spring. Teachers are also preparing report cards, making field trips harder to achieve. This season has been different however, Programming staff are busier than any January to date. During the pandemic, a great amount of goodwill was offered by staff reaching out to teachers, parents, and the public. Staff did an excellent job brainstorming creative ways to ensure the WCMA retained exposure, dropping off crafts, partnering with businesses to create the County Cocktails, and delivering many virtual talks to a variety of audiences. This effort has been paying off in increased demand, much of it from teachers and organizers who found what we were doing during the pandemic, realized it was of a high quality, and have now continued that relationship going forward. January saw 160 students from eight classes, in addition to 9 adult outreach sessions.

Special lectures and sessions have been created for Black History Month, detailing the rich Black heritage of Wellington County which have been growing in demand. Session bookings are taking place across the County, most notably a return with the Upper Grand District School Board, where this partnership last year reached each school in the Board and over 2,000 students.

Archives Update

During the month of January 59 researchers visited the Archives Reading Room, 88 members of the public phoned in or emailed to ask Archives staff for assistance and 9 photograph reproduction orders were processed.

Many requests this month related to information on how to donate a variety of archival items to the collection including: Covid 19 records, photographs used on the classroom walls of S.S.#3 Binkham School, Erin Township, a Blyth family tree, United Church records, postcards of Rockwood and the Elora Gorge, Norwell District High School newsletters as well as WWII letters sent to an Elora resident.

Additional requests covered a wide variety topics which included: a request to correct a record in our collections database; seeking a copy of a Quirt and Church family history from Arthur Township; looking for a U.S.S.#10 Mornington Township school photograph; needing assistance on how to find resources available to research a soldier who was a member of the Canadian Base Reinforcement Group North West Europe; mistakenly looking for Wellington, New Zealand archives to research great grandfather who owned a Jewish boarding house; looking for information in connection to a Simmons furniture, Elora reproduction dresser "authenticated by the Wellington County Museum"; searching for Fergus rugby team photographs in the Fergus-Elora News Express negative collection; research into the Richardson and Baptie families of West Garfraxa Township; property history of a home in Hillsburgh built in 1927; looking for burial listing for Brown's Cemetery in Clifford; seeking Palmerston tax assessments for 1907 and 1914; a doctoral student wishing to visit to look at records relating to a research project to decolonize the place narratives of Guelph; looking for records relating to the Drayton Town Hall and Amaranth Township family research; looking for plot holders in Everton Cemetery; researching the Welsh family in Maryborough Township and the McConachie family of Arthur and Minto Townships; wanting to establish Guelph Progress Edition 1927 column heading information; the Passchendaele Archives were looking for research into a WWI soldier, Thomas Riddolls of Drayton; location of Scott family farms purchased in Guelph Township in 1941 and 1952; research into an Arthur commercial building; looking for resources on McIntosh and Vickers families of Elora; looking for a resource to scan personal 35 mm negatives; wanting to determine 1911 location of

Johnson family relatives house in Elora; researching Riordan family of Arthur area; property history research in Puslinch Township and requesting copies of maps from the 1906 Wellington County Atlas.

Photograph reproduction order requests included: looking for photos of Hopewell Children's Home in Guelph Township for their 40th anniversary; black history documentary; photo to be used on a mural; 1935 Cummins map of Wellington County; Wellington County OGS newsletter for black history article; architectural plan of Goldstone United Church; Eramosa Rifle Company camped at Carlton Heights, London in 1893 a family history and KW Record, Flash in the Past article on Eden Mills.



WELLINGTON COUNTY'S
2ND ANNUAL

Writers' Festival

CALL FOR
SUBMISSIONS

www.wellington.ca/WritersFest

Staff are planning the second annual Writers' Festival on Saturday June 10, in partnership with the Wellington County Library. The inaugural event focused on Wellington County writers and subject matter and this year we will open the event to welcome writers from surrounding communities of Dufferin, Grey, Huron, and Perth Counties, as well as the City of Guelph and the Region of Waterloo. Staff are encouraging writers to participate by promoting in writers' faculties at universities, and in the newspaper. Writers are encouraged to apply to take part with applications open until February 24.

Participants and visitors can expect a book market, author readings, entertainment, and refreshments. New this year, a contest which will include various categories. To inspire young writers, the contest will subsequently be promoted via the School Boards. Also new this year, an exhibit of typewriters. The WCMA is partnering with Willow Creek Typewriters to display 12 typewriters as part of the festival.

Exhibit Opening – Quiet Moments

A lovely opening reception for the Quiet Moments exhibition was held on January 12 with 124 visitors in attendance. Running until March 12, Quiet Moments celebrates the beauty of the Elora Gorge through the work of renowned artist Barry McCarthy, and famed Elora photographer John Robert Connon (1862-1931).



QUIET MOMENTS

JANUARY 12 – MARCH 12, 2023

Discover the beauty of the Elora Gorge through the work of renowned artist Barry McCarthy and photographer John Connon.

OPENING RECEPTION:
Thursday, January 12
7:00 - 9:00 pm

From left: Ph 1385 (detail) by John Connon and Low Levels on the Irvine (detail) by Barry McCarthy.



Wellington County Museum and Archives | 519.846.0916 x 5221 | www.wellington.ca/museum

Exhibit Opening – Our Stories. Our History. Our Heritage.

The WCMA was grateful to partner with the Guelph Black Heritage Society (GBHS) on a new exhibition which opened January 4, complete with Jamaican jerk and Railway City Brewing Lantern Ale. Opening as part of Black Heritage Month, this show highlights past and present accomplishments within the Black community and acknowledges the resilience and bravery of those that came before. It also highlights the role of the GBHS in providing opportunities to educate, celebrate, and advocate for issues of importance for Black Canadians. While such exhibits are common in urban centres, the WCMA is pleased to be a space for such knowledge and history in our rural community as well.



FEBRUARY 4 – JULY 9, 2023

The Wellington County Museum and Archives presents, a **Guelph Black Heritage Society** exhibit; honouring the past, celebrating today and looking towards the future.

Opening Reception: Saturday, February 4,
1:30 - 4:00 pm at the Wellington County Museum.
MUSIC • FOOD • CELEBRATION



www.wellington.ca/GBHS



Wellington County Museum and Archives | 519.846.0916 x 5221 | www.wellington.ca/museum

Artifact Redirection

The WCMA relies on donations from the public to grow its collection, and staff are grateful for every offer of artifacts they receive. Unfortunately, we frequently must turn items away if they do not meet our mandate or if we already have similar items in the collection, as per our Collections Policy. Whenever possible, staff attempt to provide alternatives for donors seeking a new home for an item, two examples of which are provided below.

Second World War Flag

Earlier this winter the WCMA was offered a German flag from the Second World War, which did not meet our collections criteria. It was captured by a Canadian Engineer from Toronto, who wrote the date and name of the town where he found it on the flag. WCMA staff helped the owner roll the flag in acid-free tissue to aid in preservation and put them in contact with the Canadian Military Engineers (CME) Museum at CFB Gagetown in New Brunswick. The CME Museum has expressed a keen interest in adding the flag to their collection, where it can help tell the story of Canadian Military Engineers during the Second World War.

First World War Uniform

Last year the WCMA was offered a First World War uniform with the name "A. Rider" stitched into the jacket. Upon further research, staff determined the likely owner was an Alfred Rider of Weisenburg, Waterloo County, and with the permission of the donor, contacted the Waterloo Legion who wished to have it as part of their collection. The Legion was grateful to receive the uniform and has since incorporated it into a display in their lounge. One week ago staff received this follow-up email from the Bob Berg at the Waterloo Legion:

"I have the uniform in our veteran's lounge. I was sitting in the lounge with some longtime friends and one of them, Norma McClenaghan who is 101 years old thanked me for entering her husband (Mel), brother Ralph Keller, and brother-in-law Harold Stecho's veterans stories to our Provincial Veterans Recognition Book, but wishes we also should have entered her Great Uncle Alfred, so I got out a pencil and paper and started writing. 'What's his last name?' [I asked,] and she said 'Rider,' and confirmed that he was born in Weisenburg. When I showed her [the display] and told her who that uniform belonged to the tears started running down her cheeks and I had to sit her down. Many thanks to you, BoB."



Destination Development

The Destination Development Project is now complete, and the report completed by BC Hughes is included in the Committee package. The work to develop this report culminated over several months beginning in summer 2022, and included workshops, stakeholder interviews and input from all WCMA staff. The report speaks to the importance of being true to our strengths, namely the Poor House story, unique events, and the National Historic Site designation. The recommendations are actionable, meaningful and would take the WCMA in a direction that is authentic and future-minded. We look forward to receiving Committee's thoughts on the report. An all-staff meeting will take place over the next month to discuss the recommendations, and a plan for implementing the work therein.

Recommendation:

That the WCMA Update be received for information and forwarded to County Council.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Burns', written in a cursive style.

Jana Burns
Wellington Place Administrator