

**DRAFT**

**COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE**

**ARCHIVE REPORT – JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2025**

The Archives Collection Committee lost two members early 2025 – Jeff Murray who retired and Julie Hamilton who resigned due to business and family obligations. Effective January 2026, a new volunteer, Sherry Brydon has joined the Collection Committee. During the last year, the Committee has worked on the following:

**PASTPERFECT MIGRATION**

We continue to work on the PastPerfect project, updating images that are blurry, too dark/light, inputting new information on existing artifacts and documents and updating the ‘People’ section. As a result of our labelling all of the “Object” and ‘Photo’ images last year, enquiries from the public requesting additional information frequently include the accession number and description which aids us in responding to their requests.

Prior to the exhibit of our signature quilts and inclusion in the North Grenville Historical Society Collection of Quilts book, photographs of each square were taken, transferred into PastPerfect along with the hundreds of names on each square. This will be useful when searching an individual’s family history.

There were 5,588 object records for a total of 15,561 images and 1,169 photographic records for a total of 2,108 images. This does not include the images in the ‘People’ section which has 3,223 records of which 10-15% have been researched. For those researching an ancestor, it will also reference all artifacts in our collection related to them.

**CREELMAN COLLECTION**

The Creelman Collection consists of materials documenting school operations in the rural community of Burritt’s Rapids primarily in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It includes property taxes that supported operations as well as records of property acquisition and transfers. There are also records pertaining to the school operations, financing, property assessments and mortgages, as well as some general correspondence and multiple examples of payment receipts. The project has been completed for a total of 331 items with 507 images input into PastPerfect.

## **WATCHORN WOOLLEN MILL EXHIBIT**

The Watchorn exhibit in the Blockhouse has been extended until 2026. The exhibit consists of the history of the mill, family portraits, community participation, original blankets and suit material samples produced over the century by the Watchorn Woollen Mill.

## **2026 PROJECTS (looking for volunteers)**

- **The Historic Rideau Canal – Merrickville Edition** – This summer, we are working in partnership with Glen Russell of the Elgin and Area Heritage Society to install their exhibit with modifications that will include information on Merrickville and area. There will be an exterior panel in front of the Blockhouse and the main exhibit will be on the second floor of the Blockhouse. The exhibit will consist of a 12' x 4' display grid with 16 panels.
- **A Refresh of the Blockhouse** – The blockhouse has not had a serious refresh since the 1970's. Once approvals have been received, the MDHS and Museum Services Board will:
  - ✓ Move the Rideau Canal exhibit on the main floor and create a children's area for school programs, book signings, temporary displays, etc.
  - ✓ Modify the agricultural and industrial areas and add new signage
  - ✓ Update the panel behind the front desk
  - ✓ On the main floor, create wall panels commemorating local Merrickville figures
  - ✓ On the second floor's rotunda, install the Elgin exhibit
  - ✓ Move the current bedroom to the Archive room on the opposite side of the Blockhouse
  - ✓ Use the above-mentioned bedroom area for a textile exhibit with ties to the Watchorn exhibit next door
  - ✓ Move the large Archive room display case to the rotunda and put in an exhibit featuring a local resident, Norman Walsh, who served in the Boer War and WWI as well as working on the Rideau Canal as a carpenter/foreman for 40 years.
  - ✓ Update and reprint the 'Women of Merrickville' panel.
  - ✓ Acquire additional storage for the artifacts being removed for the refresh.

## **MISCELLANEOUS PROJECTS IN PROGRESS OR COMPLETED**

- **Fibre-by-the-Lock Exhibit** – We were invited to participate in the exhibit in October 2025 at the Pews. We displayed 7 of our quilts including the signature quilts. We also had a manned display table on Watchorn Woollen Mills. Ann Martin was responsible for this project, preparing a Powerpoint presentation, collecting the quilts and Watchorn items, setting up the displays and subsequently taking down and returning them to the Archives and/or Blockhouse. Additional ‘thanks’ to Greg Eamon and his aunt for their assistance.
- **North Grenville Historical Society Quilt Collection Book for 2024** – seven of our quilts, in particular, the signature quilts were featured in this book. Under each of the quilts, our website address was included. This book is available for purchase.
- **Hire a Student** – We are applying for a Young Canada Works grant for a 4-month hire to conduct research on the history of the Blockhouse and Merrickville, collection clean-up, etc.
- **Political Buttons** – The donation of 1,000+ municipal, provincial and federal political buttons did not meet our Collection Policy mandate. They were sold off, with Executive approval, and the proceeds deposited in the MDHS account.
- **Military Metals/Buttons** – The WWII military buttons were found in our collection with no provenance and are reproductions. They have been itemized and photographed and the material has been sent to collectors to see if they are interested in purchasing them.
- **Gilroy Collection** – We received from the Smiths Falls Historical Society a collection of photographs, postcards, letters, etc. on the Gilroy family who lived primarily in Burritt’s Rapids. The Committee has accepted this collection into the Archives and Cindi Delcorde is currently reviewing and researching the family.
- **Pews Collection** – we received a large collection of documents, photographs, framed pictures, tapes and books from Ann Barr on behalf of the United Church. With our current workload, this project has been postponed until time permits.
- **McLean Panels** – Cindi Delcorde completed this project. The display panels were updated and reprinted in both languages.
- **Book Conservation** – Two important books, the ‘Tallman Ledger’ and the ‘McGuigan Cemetery Book’ had quite a bit of mold damage. Ann Martin contacted a Book and Paper Conservationist who provided remediation repairs. They are now back in the Collection.

- **2025 Donations** – We accepted, reviewed and accessioned various objects (books, sewing machine, Watchorn water pitcher, etc.) and photographs.
- **Blockhouse Opening/Closing** – the committee and volunteers helped set up the Blockhouse for the summer and shut it down for the winter. We also provided training to the students.
- **MDHS Collection Management Policy** – the Merrickville and District Historical Society Collection Management Policy was reviewed and updated this year.
- **Miscellaneous** - we responded to requests for information, provided tours, set up exhibits, etc.

#### **VOLUNTEER HOURS**

Many thanks to our volunteers who gave the Merrickville and District Historical Society 1,623 hours of their time working at the Blockhouse, the Archives, researching, working on collections, providing tours and participating on the Executive Board, the Museum Board and the Collections Committee.

Nancy Warr

Collections Committee