



Merrickville and District Historical Society

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT
November 1, 2022 – October 31, 2023**

The 2022 - 2023 year was a big one for MDHS, with a lot of new and exciting things happening.

We have had an extremely successful Speaker Series this year – thank you Donna Ross (and technical support Peter Szmidt) for getting this very popular event back up and running. With 10 events in 2023, and approximately 30-40 people at each event, I feel that we have done a great job. A lot of new people have come out – and we have signed up quite a few new members. Of course, sweets and treats provided by Violets on Main is always a bonus. (BTW these are always provided free of charge – Thank you Patti and Trevor!)

Membership is up thanks to Karen Finstad – who has developed a new membership sign up form – keeps track of everyone, and does not let anyone get past her at events! The Square has been a great asset – making it easy for people to pay and or donate.

While we currently have 38 life members who will remain as such – we are no longer offering it anymore. Similarly, we will not have family memberships either – just individual. This makes things easier to track numbers and keep emails accurate. Each member gets a vote. We now have 124 members as

of January 1, 2024, and 36 are brand new people (this is up from 105 this time last year). Renewals and information get sent out by Mailchimp and we are able to keep members more informed.

Speaking of more informed – we have a new Social Media Director – Irene Chahley. She manages our Website and Facebook pages and does a great job! I am sure you have noticed her wonderful posts and there will be more to come.

Another initiative that we have revived is the MDHS Newsletter. We sent out one in the summer (to 75 individuals) and another in early December (85 members). Thank you Chris Eyton for taking the lead on this. We hope to have them out quarterly moving forward. Make sure we have your correct email address.

Something that we have been working on this year is reviewing and rewriting our Constitution. Written decades ago – it was in need of an overhaul – and the Provincial Government has mandated all Charitable and Not for Profit organizations do this by end of 2024. Cheri Kemp-Long, Bob Long, Karen Finstad, Ann Martin and myself have been busy on this project. It is complicated, and due to our charitable status, we have to deal with CRA (!) but we are getting there. While we hoped to be ready to present for this AGM, such is not the case. So we will be calling a General Meeting sometime soon to have members approve and vote of the new Constitution. Please stand by!

Our Collection's Committee has been working hard behind the scenes keeping our Archives and Artefacts preserved and in order. Nancy Warr has been the powerhouse behind this Committee for years – and gave us a

wonderful tour this summer – sharing her vast knowledge of our collection. Please look online or in your package for an Archive report for 2023. On a personal note – Nancy suffered a very bad fall while visiting her daughter in Montreal. She will be in hospital for quite some time. We are all thinking of her and wishing for a speedy recovery.

And now to the **Blockhouse Museum**. We were successful in getting funding for 4 student interpreters, which was great. We were able to make one a supervisor as he was in his second year and had the experience. It is always wonderful to have local youth work in this program for us. We could not have managed without the supervisory help of Mary Kate Laphen and Omar Simonyi, for day-to-day management and boots on the ground help. We designed and ordered much needed new shirts/uniforms for the students this year. Very high-end polo shirts and we were lucky that we have a wonderful local lady Shannon Burke from Encore Embroidery to design new logo patches.

While not quite back up to pre-pandemic numbers – we did have close to 8000 visitors. Not as many as the Depot but then – we do not have washrooms!

Our donations were the highest ever - \$6319 at the Blockhouse and an extra \$2788 direct to MDHS to help us with specific projects. This includes \$2000 that the Lions Club gave us as a one time financial lift .By the way – we have just received \$850 from Ontario Waterway Cruises (Kawartha) for the 11 special opening tours we did for them over the season but this will show in 2024 financials.

The biggest news is – that after 13 years without – we now once again have a Museum Board. Called the Merrickville-Wolford Municipal Museum

Services Board it will be the new governing body moving forward in the running, staffing and management of the Blockhouse Museum. Deputy Mayor Anne Barr, Ann Martin and myself worked hard to draft the new By Law, and write terms of reference that need to be in place. Ann Martin is the new Chair and Omar Simonyi is the Secretary. DM Barr, Kirsten Kahn and four more volunteers will make up the board of 8. I believe the plan is to apply for grant funding and eventually have a municipal staff person (FT or PT) to help with the running of the Museum. (Board model set up similar to the Library Board). Lots of things to work through, not the least of which will be the financials. Exciting times and long time coming. A big thank you to Mayor Cameron and Deputy Mayor Barr – who made sure this stayed on the radar and became a reality.

Without the time, resources and commitment needed to run the Museum, MDHS will have more time to explore and get involved in new activities and ventures. We need to be thinking about what other things we would like to be doing.

We have had Open House wine and cheese, Private Members tour to name just a few new things. I invite you to revisit the Executive Summary from the Operations Strategy research we did last year for some ideas on what the public said they wanted. And what do you, the members want?

On the topic of new projects and initiatives – I have been involved in a working committee to build a HF Mclean/Rudyard Kipling life-size bronze monument commemorating the 100th anniversary of the ***Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer***. (May 2025) Mclean was the financial backer of this new concept, Kipling wrote and donated his poem Sons Of Martha. You will

see a presentation in more detail on this at the AGM. I am hoping for support from MDHS membership to have MDHS act as lead on this Legacy Project.

In conclusion – I would like to thank our community partners for their help and skills in making MDHS what we are today:

Village of Merrickville- Wolford

Violets on Main

Merrickville Legion Branch 245

COBA Studios

Merrickville Phoenix

Canada Summer Jobs

Young Canada Works

Merrickville Lions Club

Thank you to our hard working Board of Directors and Working Committee members.

But of greatest importance is thank you to our supportive Members.

Respectfully,

Jane Graham

MDHS President