



PETERBOROUGH

HISTORICAL SOCIETY | EST. 1897

UPCOMING EVENTS

Peterborough Historical
Society

Monthly Meeting
by Zoom

Members must register

PHS Zoom Meeting
at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, 18 January

Speaker Ken Brown

Tuesday, 15 February

Speaker Wendy Darby

Tuesday, 15 March

Speaker Michael Chappell

Tuesday, 19 April

Peterborough Historical
Society AGM

Tuesday, 17 May

Speaker Dennis Carter-
Edwards

Hutchison House
Museum

Games Night

at the Museum

Every third Thursday of the
month

Thursday, 16 December

6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Heritage Luncheon

Wednesday, 1 December

Charles Dickens's

A Christmas Carol

in the Keeping Room

Saturday, 11 December

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Dylan Thomas's

A Child's Christmas in Wales

and Stuart McLean's

Polly Anderson's Christmas

Party

Sunday, 12 December

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Victorian Christmas for Kids

Saturday, 18 December

10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Hogmanay meal-to-go

pre-order by 20 December

Issue 481

December 2021

PETERBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY WINTER/SPRING SPEAKER SCHEDULE

The monthly speaker series in winter/spring 2022 will continue to be conducted on Zoom with a question and answer period following the speaker's presentation. They take place on the **third Tuesday of the month: January, February, March and May at 7:30 p.m.** Attendees will be provided with the link to join meetings when they register by email. **Specific registration instructions will accompany the lecture notices in advance in the *Bulletin*.**

Tuesday, 18 January: Ken Brown on new insights into John A. Macdonald's connection with Peterborough.

Tuesday, 15 February: Wendy Darby will discuss the archives at Lakefield College School and the fascinating collection as a source for local history.

Tuesday, 15 March: Michael Chappell will recount the history and determined efforts of a group of volunteers to preserve the historic Old Stone Mill House in Lakefield.

Tuesday, 19 April: Peterborough Historical Society AGM, guest speaker TBA.

Tuesday, 17 May: Dennis Carter-Edwards will explore the origins of the City's water works in the late nineteenth century in response to concerns of health and fire protection.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER!

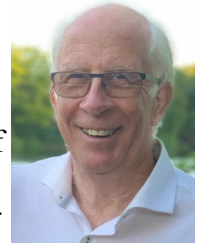
If you have renewed your PHS membership for 2022, THANK YOU! If not, you now have more convenient options to do so. With our new website, you can renew directly online at: <https://phs-hutchisonhouse.ca/support/become-a-member/new-and-returning-members/>, or download and complete the PDF form and mail it with your payment. Keep informed and in touch with our community's history, continue to enjoy the several benefits of membership and support the monthly *Bulletin*, the speaker series, the publication of an annual historical booklet, heritage awards, Hutchison House Museum and other initiatives that preserve and celebrate the region's history!

The Peterborough Historical Society acknowledges with thanks the support of the City of Peterborough, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport of Ontario, and the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough.



From the President ...

Bob Taylor-Vaisey



We promised to keep everyone up to date on how we are progressing on a number of fronts.

First, please visit the new website. It's pretty impressive. Kudos to Dale Standen for a tremendous effort to bring a concept to reality.

Second, thanks for all your feedback. I am reassured that we are doing the right things at the right time ... the right way. And, remember that the flip side of 'talk to us' is 'we will listen.'

Planning ahead, and in particular, to 2022, is a challenge in COVID-19 times. I would like to say 'in post-COVID times' but that seems to be some time off. The years 2020 and 2021 really gave us little data to plan ahead, and we will be holding a think-tank working session later this month to help unravel those mysteries. Part of our planning needs is recruitment of Board members and Committee chairs. In December, we'll be more specific.

The Board of Directors has approved a recommendation of the Trustees of the PHS Trust Funds to transfer the Hutchison House Endowment Fund and the Maintenance Trust Fund to the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough to achieve a more effective management of the Funds. The recommendation is based upon an extensive review of investment management options undertaken by a Trust Management Review Committee established by the Board of Directors in 2019. At the time of the original Trust Deed in 1983 and its amendment in 1998 the opportunity for small charities such as ours to join a larger, professionally managed pool of endowed funds did not exist. The review determined that joining the CFGP would provide safer management and improved results in perpetuity to support Hutchison House Museum.

When finalized, the terms of agreement with the CFGP will be submitted to the membership of the Peterborough Historical Society for ratification.

Stay tuned, be patient and, above all, optimistic about an exciting future for the Society and Hutchison House Museum.

PHS previous month's meeting "A Peterborough Veteran of the Spanish Civil War"

The November lecture of the Peterborough Historical Society on Zoom attracted an audience of nearly forty. Janette Higgins gave a rich and fascinating portrait of her father's life that saw him champion democracy and worker's rights in Saskatchewan in the 1930s, join the defense of the Popular Front Government in the Spanish Civil War in 1937 and settle in Peterborough where he married and raised his family after 1942. Jim Higgins' life is a window into the turbulent era of the twentieth century shaped by economic depression, social unrest, ideological extremism and war.

Janette Higgins masterfully wove the narrative of her father's life from his being orphaned in the First World War in England, through his positive experience in orphanages and trade schools, to his challenges as a young, single man in Saskatchewan and Alberta in the Depression years. He participated in the On-to-Ottawa Trek of 1935 and experienced its violent suppression in Regina. His actions for social and political justice attracted the surveillance of the RCMP who kept a file on him for almost the rest of his life. His decision to join the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War as an "antifascist," joining 1700 other Canadians in the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion, the "Mac-Paps," was a powerful statement of commitment and clearly transformed his life.

On his return to Saskatoon from Spain in 1939 Higgins spent months raising funds for disabled veterans of the Spanish Civil War. In September, he applied to join the Canadian army but was rejected as a security risk. He helped form the United Reform Movement and headed up the successful federal by-election campaign in Saskatoon of the Movement's candidate, Reverend W.G. Brown. To "escape the heat from the RCMP" in 1940 he set off on a bicycle trip across the U.S.A. to visit families of comrades killed in Spain and other veteran friends. After arriving in Toronto, he worked briefly as a sign painter before heading to Peterborough for employment in the burgeoning munitions industry at Canadian General Electric and later at Outboard Marine Corporation. In Peterborough, he met and married Reta Palliser with whom he raised their family. He remained ac-

tive in union work and leftwing politics. Before he died in 1982 he was tracked down by Manuel Alvarez, a Spaniard whose life Jim saved in 1938 when Manuel was a boy. Alvarez recounted his quest in a book, *The Tall Soldier: My 40-Year Search for the Man Who Saved my Life*.

Janette Higgins gave the audience more than a narrative of her father's life. As children, we know little about our parents and questions seem to come after they are gone. Janette benefitted from having her father's memoirs but making sense of them and imagining a parent's thoughts and emotions in historical context requires much research, skill in asking the right questions, and disciplined imagination. Janette Higgins succeeded in this task and thereby gave us a fine lesson in how to do family history.

Dale Standen

Copies of *Fighting for Democracy* can be purchased from the Hutchison House Museum Bookstore for curbside pick-up: \$23.00: 270 Brock Street, Peterborough. For arrangements, phone 705-743-9710, or email: info@hutchisonhouse.ca, or info@peterboroughhistoricalsociety.ca. Copies may also be purchased at Happenstance Books and Yarns, 44 Queen Street, Lakefield, 705-652-7535.



HER FAITH IN HUMANITY RESTORED. 11-year-old Janette Higgins is shown here happily studying the workings of her new bicycle, bought through the generosity of an anonymous Peterborough resident. Janette only recently bought a bicycle of her own from savings she had accumulated. That bike was thrown off Hunter St. bridge last Thursday by two boys. This morning a \$50 cheque was received by the city police department and Janette was taken to get a new bicycle. Here she is pictured being shown the bicycle by Tom Mark of 171 Antrim Street. Mr. Mark is in charge of the T. Eaton Co. sporting goods department. (Examiner Staff Photo)

Article transcription:

Her faith in humanity restored, 11-year old Janette Higgins is shown here happily studying the workings of her new bicycle, bought through the generosity of an anonymous Peterborough resident. Janette only recently bought a bicycle of her own from savings she had accumulated. That bike was thrown off Hunter St. bridge last Thursday by two boys. This morning a \$50 cheque was received by the city police department and Janette was taken to get a new bicycle. Here she is pictured being shown the bicycle by Tom Mark of 171 Antrim Street. Mr. Mark is in charge of the T. Eaton Co. sporting goods department. (Examiner Staff Photo).

Peterborough Examiner, 20 Sept 1955, p.1 (Courtesy of Robert Ganton Clarke)

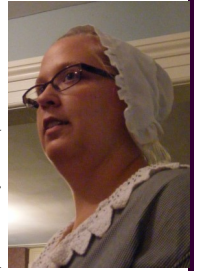


Jim & Reta Higgins and family in Peterborough. Janette on far left.

Courtesy Janette Higgins.

Hutchison House Report

Erin Panepinto



As I sit to write my report on this blustery day mid-November, Mother Nature's first round of snow is melting on the ground. We're preparing for our annual Christmas Market and volunteers are looking ahead to all the fun seasonal activities Hutchison House Museum has planned for this Holiday Season.

Mark your calendars for a reading of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* by firelight in the Keeping Room on Saturday, December 11th, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. We will also be listening to a recording of the 1939 Campbell Soup radio show presented by Orson Welles and starring Lionel Barrymore as Ebenezer Scrooge. A choice of dessert, tea and coffee will be served. The cost for the event is \$20 per person prepaid or \$30 per person if you book both *A Christmas Carol* and *A Child's Christmas in Wales* / "Polly Anderson's Christmas Party" scheduled for December 12th, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Seating is limited.

The Museum will be decorated for the holiday season. Come and enjoy a tour and learn how the Hutchison family would have celebrated this time of year with our Victorian Christmas for Kids event on Saturday, December 18th, 10 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Visits will be scheduled with 15-minute timed entries with a maximum of 6 people (of the same household). Children can make a holiday craft, enjoy some festive treats and participate in several safe Christmas activities. Masks are required while touring the Museum and high-touch surfaces will be cleaned between visitors. Admission is \$5 per person; children under the age of 5 are free. Register in advance to ensure a spot.

As the New Year quickly approaches, our annual Hogmanay event is in the thoughts of all the staff and volunteers. Unfortunately, despite the loosening of some restrictions, we feel that we cannot celebrate Hogmanay safely if we were to run the event as normal. Instead, Hutchison House Museum volunteers will be creating Hogmanay meal-to-go with much of the food that we would normally serve on January 1st. You must pre-order your meals by 20 December 2021. Meals will be available for curbside pick-up between 12 noon and 2:00 p.m. on 31 December 2021. Meals are \$20 each and will include: a Scotch egg, tatters and neeps, oatcakes, cheese, a sample of potted salmon, shortbread and cloutie dumpling. For an extra \$5, you can also enjoy a piece of Haggis.

We are hoping to provide some fun content on our social media platforms; be sure to keep an eye on our new website for details.

To receive more information, order a Hogmanay meal, or book a ticket to one of our fireside stories or Christmas for Kids events, please contact the Museum at 705-743-9710 or info@hutchisonhouse.ca.

A reminder that proof of Vaccination and Photo ID are required for entry into Hutchison House Museum, with the exception of anyone entering for the purpose of curbside pick-up.

Mystery Artifact Answer: I am a yarn swift! Yarn swifts are used to wind hanks of yarn into balls that can then be used for knitting. Since a hank is wound around the swift, it prevents the yarn from getting tangled and knotted.

CHECK OUT THE NEW WEBSITE!

Our new website is launched! The Peterborough Historical Society and Hutchison House Museum have a new, combined website. The home page URL of the Peterborough Historical Society is <https://phs-hutchisonhouse.ca/>. The Hutchison House Museum page is <https://phs-hutchisonhouse.ca/hutchison-house/>. The URLs for the previous, separate websites will take you to the new website: so will a simple Google search of Peterborough Historical Society or Hutchison House Museum. The completely redesigned and revised website now includes interactive features that were unavailable on the old sites. It also provides more information about the PHS and HHM and includes an archive of the *Bulletin* back to 2012. Log on and explore the site!



Artifact Yarn Swift

Haunted Hallowe'en at Hutchison House Museum





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Voices of Peterborough's Past

Richard Birdsall Rogers: A Man of Many Parts

The story of R.B. Rogers and his pioneering work in building the Peterborough hydraulic lift lock is well known but there are many other significant facets to the life and career of this important local figure. Born to a prominent Peterborough family in 1857, Rogers graduated from McGill University in 1877 with a civil and mechanical engineering degree. In 1881, he married Mina Calcutt, daughter of Henry Calcutt, noted brewer and later steamboat entrepreneur.

Less well known is the wider dimension of the accomplishments of Rogers. Appointed superintending engineer of the Trent Valley Canal in 1884, Rogers had a challenge in navigating through the political pitfalls that were endemic in large scale federal government projects. When the Liberals won in 1896 under Wilfrid Laurier, Rogers' political enemies mobilized and forced his resignation in 1905. With his reputation under attack and in search of a means to support his wife and six children, Rogers engaged in a complex but ultimately successful negotiation to acquire an interest in the Northumberland Paper Company in Campbellford. The company not only produced high quality paper but was an early pioneer in applying hydroelectric power to industrial operations. Rogers also put his diverse skills and business connections to work on land development. He purchased property on Clear Lake and in 1906 had a portion surveyed into twenty lots which sold for \$125.00 each. Kawartha Park became a popular "cottage community" and successful development for Rogers.

In March 1908, Rogers teamed up with William Dennon and won the contract for building Section #2 of the Ontario-Rice Lake Division of the Trent Canal. Despite his abysmal treatment by the Department of Railways and Canals, Rogers was scrupulous in the application of men and materials to the construction of three dams, three locks, one bridge and the dredging of a four mile stretch from Glen Miller to Frankford. The quality of his work stood the test of time and the sites remained in excellent condition decades later.

Rogers was also adept in design and maintenance of vessels. He owned a yacht and steamboat that he personally maintained in good working order – a testament to his engineering skills. An accomplished public speaker, Rogers' wide interests were reflected in his public illustrated lectures on topics such as bird watching. He also presented an illustrated lecture to his Alma Mater on Canada's canals. He even arranged for a set of the glass plate images to be deposited with the Engineering Department at McGill University. A disciplined diarist, Rogers faithfully recorded his daily activities which now form part of the Trent University Archives collection and provide a unique window on the career and contribution of this noteworthy Peterborough figure.

Dennis Carter-Edwards



R.B. Rogers with his wife
Mina and daughters Leah
and Lillian (l-r), 1917

(Geale-Rogers fonds, 82-
022/15/13, Trent University
Archives)