



PETERBOROUGH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NOGOJIWANONG EST. 1897

Annual Report 2025

Prepared for the Annual General Meeting
Tuesday, April 21st, 2026, 7PM
Lions Community Centre, Ashburnham

Peterborough Historical Society Board Executive:

President: Don Willcock

Treasurer: Paul Lumsden

Secretary: Hailey Lansley

Bulletin Chair: Marilyn MacNaughton

Membership Chair: Hailey Lansley

PACAC Representative: Marilyn MacNaughton

Members at Large: Michael Peterman, Linda Chandler (HHMC Chair) David Wesley

Trust Funds Trustees:

Chairperson: Peter Darling

Treasurer: Marilyn MacNaughton

Members at Large: Dennis Carter-Edwards, Doug Lavery

Hutchison House Management Committee:

Chair: Linda Chandler

Curator: Erin Panepinto

Property: Don Willcock

Friends: Michael Peterman

Financial: Paul Lumsden

Acquisitions: Hailey Lansley

Gardens: Diane Card (until September 2025)

Members at large: Bill Corbett

Recording Secretary: Hailey Lansley

Staff Members:

Administrator/Curator: Erin Panepinto

Museum Assistant: Hailey Lansley

Summer Staff:

Scottish Tea Coordinator: Kaitlin Pinch

Museum Programming Assistant: Emma Hammers

Curatorial Assistant: Avery Larmer

Historical Interpreter: Zoe McEwen

Presidents Report

This report may have a similar ring to last year's but that is because several of the issues and difficulties that the Peterborough Historical Society (PHS) and Hutchison House Museum faced in 2025 – a drop in volunteers to organize and assist with programming and events, a dearth of out-of-town bus tours for teas and tours, shrinking membership, rising costs and expenses, lower donation totals, etc. -- are ongoing. We are not alone in these matters, however; heritage sites and groups throughout Ontario, Canada, and the world are dealing with such problems. Our museum, heritage groups, and historic site counterparts in the United States have been especially hard hit recently by drastic government funding cuts, often directly tied to politically-motivated “guidelines” and rules for exhibiting and interpreting their collections and sites, or as a result of new (and questionable) governmental policies. I am thankful that Canadians do not have to deal with those added restrictions, at least!

If you, or people you know, are interested in being a volunteer with the PHS and/or Hutchison House we have lots of opportunities to join the dedicated corps we already have. The House and Society always can use more hands with programming, organizing and helping at special events, gardening, guiding, working at “behind the scenes” tasks, as Board or sub-committee members, and assisting with PHS regular meetings and/or events -- to name a few. Volunteering can be a rewarding experience, a chance to use your special talents, and even to learn some new skills.

On a positive note: the 3-year re-development construction of Bethune Street that caused a lot of nuisance, noise, dust, and parking restrictions for Hutchison House was completed. There are a few “kinks” still to be worked out, but the 2025 summer Scottish teas were a lot easier to operate without the construction noise, dust, and parking issues of the previous couple of years’.

Once again, I wish to thank my fellow PHS Board members: Linda Chandler, Paul Lumsden, Dave Wesley, Marilyn McNaughton, and Michael Peterman. Their ongoing dedication and hard work on behalf of the Society and Hutchison House is invaluable, and makes my job an easier one. Thanks also to Erin Panepinto, Hutchison House Curator, and Hailey Lansley, who doubles as Assistant-Curator and PHS staff person. Thanks also to all the supporters and volunteers of Hutchison House and the PHS, without whom it is unlikely neither the organization nor the museum would operate as they do.

I am looking forward to 2026 and beyond for the PHS and Hutchison House – with the help of a loyal team of “friends”, as well as supportive levels of government. We can do it!

Don Willcock, President
Peterborough Historical Society

The Financial Report

For the year ending December 31, 2025, the Peterborough Historical Society produced a small surplus. This was mainly due to a significant increase in members’ donations over 2024 plus the HODG grant received from the Federal Government.

For a detailed review please see the 2025 UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS completed by Patrick Sweeney of Gauvreau Associates Accounting available at the Annual General Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted, Paul Lumsden, Treasurer

Program Committee Report

January 2025

“Commemoration of the British sponsored migration to Peterborough” by the Nine Ships Committee

The Peterborough Historical Society started the New Year with a presentation by the Nine Ships 1825 Inc. This Committee coordinated the commemoration and pro-motion of the British sponsored migration of some 2,000 Irish to the Peterborough region in 1825 under the supervision of Peter Robinson. The various heritage agencies throughout Peterborough and area prepared a series of special events including bus tours, a boat tour, exhibits and displays of historic material related to the original families. In addition, there were plays, musical presentations and other events to mark this milestone in the history of our community. The Committee worked closely with the Indigenous communities to insure a respectful and thoughtful reflection on the impact of this unprecedented migration scheme on both the Irish and Indigenous peoples. The panel of leading experts discussed the broad themes of migration, cultural adaptation to a new physical and cultural environment, fashioning an identity in this new environment and the legacy that is sustained by later generations. The summer preview and discussion was of great interest and attended by many members of the community.

February 2025

“The Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (PACAC) ” by Stewart Hamilton

Peterborough was the second municipality in Ontario to form a LACAC. The Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (PACAC) was established in 1975 following the creation of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) by the province. 2025 represented the 50th year since the creation of PACAC. Over the years PACAC has played a vital role in programs such as Doors Open Peterborough, Heritage Week, The Heritage Hunt as well providing educational events, work-shops for heritage homeowners, and other events celebrating our local built heritage. PACAC continues to advise city council regarding properties that are eligible for designation under the OHA. Stewart Hamilton presented on the early days of PACAC, the committee’s current work and why today it is important to recognize that heritage preservation plays a role in fighting climate change.

At the February meeting Stewart also displayed information, publications, and other documents from PACAC and its past members.

March 2025

“The Environmental History” by Drew Monkman

Educator, author, Examiner columnist and environmentalist Drew Monkman spoke to a well-attended March meeting of the Peterborough Historical Society about the history of climate change in the Peterborough region.

Using locally-collected data (such as the Bridgenorth pharmacy which has been recording the dates Chemong Lake has iced over and become ice-free since the late 19th Century) and his own records (of bird, insect and animal numbers and species) Drew was able to illustrate how the look and composition of nature and wildlife in this region has changed over the years - with drastic reductions in the number and species of insects, some fish such as walleyes, songbirds, plants and animals, while some invasive species from the U.S. have thrived and grown (possums, aggressive ladybugs, wild turkeys etc.)

He noted how easy it is to be pessimistic about climate change which seems to have fallen off political radar screens in the face of public obsession with sovereignty, trade and expanding industry to create jobs. Asked what people can do to revive interest in the environment, Drew suggested a four-pronged approach: bolster optimism by keeping connected with nature through such activities as hiking, bird-watching and feeding, gardening and fishing; encourage reliance on science and accurate data in decision-making; encourage planning and thinking for the long-term, not just for immediate results; support public education and information sharing action about climate change; not just vote, but get politically and socially engaged at all levels to insist politicians put the environment back where it belongs - at the very top of any list of issues of importance to society.

April AGM 2025

“Remembering Jean Cole” by Leslie Cole, Michael Peterman, Dennis Carter-Edwards and Elwood Jones.

Due to a scheduling error, the AGM for the PHS was relocated from the Lions Club to the Keeping Room of Hutchison House. The setting was more intimate and more appropriate for the evening's tribute to the late Jean Cole who played such an important role in the development of Hutchison House Museum after it was unexpectedly acquired from the estate of Jeanette Connal Brown. The meeting opened with a tribute by Jean's daughter Leslie who spoke about her Mom's early career in journalism, her whirlwind romance with husband Alf and their time in Peterborough. She also highlighted Jean's many writing projects including her interest in fur trade history and her family's connection to the trade. Other speakers included Stephanie Ford Forester who spoke about her time as curator at Hutchison House and her many interactions with Jean. Other friends who shared their memories of Jean included Michael Peterman who noted Jean's interest in Catharine Parr Traill and her generosity in sharing research material. Dennis Carter-Edwards spoke about the taped interview he did with Jean in 2012 and the memories she shared with him. Jean was also instrumental in the 35th anniversary celebrations for the official opening of Hutchison House Museum. Elwood Jones spoke about the early years at Trent and the important role people like Jean played in the cultural life of the community. It was a lovely evening and a suitable setting over refreshments to share stories of this remarkable woman.

May 2025

“The Lighthouses of Upper Canada and Canada West” by Walter Lewis

In the era before the GPS, the lighthouses scattered along the shores of the Great Lakes were the one reliable way of determining where a ship was at night. While the American lights were built and managed by the federal government, on the Canadian side these were the responsibility of the government of Upper Canada and later the Bureau of Public Works of the united Province of Canada. In an era dominated by massive government spending on canals, the lighthouses are often overlooked as a critical part of the safe transport of local products to distant markets. A remarkable number of these pre-Confederation structures still survive.

Walter Lewis is an award-winning maritime historian and frequent speaker, specializing in the history of Great Lakes region. This presentation took us on a journey along the Great Lakes exploring the rise and sometimes fall of these amazing and important pieces of architecture.

September 2025

“Home Children in Canada” by Marg Graham and Diane Cosway

The Home Child program, along with Dr. Barnardo's Barnardo children (the programs lasted from the mid-19th Century to the mid-20th) were part of a plan in which orphaned or destitute children from the UK were sent to be raised and work in Canada.

Families in Canada were chosen to accept the children and had to sign a contract with the sponsor organization. Many of the children went to loving homes and became productive adults, but too often they were worked to the bone as little more than indentured slaves, and frequently abused physically and sexually, incurring problems dealing with emotion for all their lives and passing those problems onto future generations. Whether they had a better life here than if they'd been left in poverty in the UK is open to debate.

There was engaging and moving discussion after the presentation as many of those present had Home Child or Barnardo ancestors and shared stories of their own. Marg and Diane provided an extensive display of Home Child pictures and artifacts.

October 2025

“R.B. “Rae” Fleming” by Tom Mohr, Ian McKechnie and Deb Mohr

The October Speakers Series featured a special presentation to honour the legacy of the late R.B. "Rae" Fleming. Fleming was an author/historian from Argyle, who frequented the Trent Valley Archives, wrote a biography of Peter Gzowski, researched at Trent University and wrote several compilations of stories from the history of Victoria County (now the 'City' of Kawartha Lakes). Fleming was beginning work on a new volume of stories when he died in 2022.

Writers/historians/editors Tom Mohr, Ian McKechnie and Deb Mohr- all of whom knew and worked with Fleming - decided to complete the work as a tribute, and the result is *Reflections on Old Victoria County*.

The trio gave an engaging and informative presentation, reading excerpts from book chapters they'd written, and talking about Fleming's impact on relating history of the region. Tom read

from Ma-noomin: the Good Seed, about Indigenous rice gathering; Ian from The Georgian Bay and Seaboard Railway; and Deb from King Connell's Final Rest.

November 2025

“Opposing War: A history of resistance to war in Peterborough and across Canada.” By Various

November's Speakers Series evening was the best attended so far this season with over 100 in attendance - Opposing War: A history of resistance to war in Peterborough and across Canada. While speakers respected remembrance of fallen Canadians on Remembrance Day, a week later they commemorated those who objected to war on principle and the courage and sacrifice they showed to promote peace.

Editor, writer and educator David Tough spoke of how attempts have been made to militarize Canadian history and build the myth of Canada as a warrior nation for political reasons. David Wesley noted of the 400,000 men and teenagers conscripted in Canada in the First World Wars, 380,510 appealed to stay home and only slightly more than 24,000 were eventually sent overseas. He also told the colorful story of the Irish Catholic community of Ennismore near Peterborough which banded together to help their young men to evade military police sent to arrest them for defaulting the draft, noting that over 1200 Canadians were charged with refusing to fight the war, 200 convicted and sentenced to death by firing squad and 25 executed by the end of the war.

Members of Peterborough's Quaker community Margaret Slavin and Mary Conchelos, and Wooler Quaker Laird Nelson spoke of the reasons for their religious commitment to pacifism going back to the American Revolution and War of 1812 and its 17th C origins in England. And in a segment titled Dodgers vs. Yankees, Bob Paelhke and Joe Erikson related their experience in avoiding fighting for the U.S. in Vietnam and making new lives for themselves in Canada.

Pairings

In April of 2025 we had two Pairings scheduled: Kathryn Matheson, Food Nutritionist and The Food Shop and JoAnne's Place Health Food Store. Unfortunately due to low interest the talk with JoAnne's Place had to be cancelled. Attempts to recruit other local businesses for presentation were met with interest, but were unfortunately not available due to timing.

Hutchison House Trust Report

Hutchison House Trust committee last met in 2023. In 2023, the Peterborough Historical Society (PHS) and the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough (CFGF) signed an agreement that the CFGF will now hold and manage the Trust funds. Each year in June, Hutchison House will receive a share of the CFGF annual earnings from all funds invested with CFGF. And so the need for the Trust fund committee has ended. Note in 2026 the last of the GICs owned by the Hutchison House Endowment Fund will be transferred to The Hutchison Trust Fund at CFGF.

As of June 2025 CFGP report, the balance in the Hutchison House Trust Fund for December 2024 was \$140,974 and the balance in the Hutchison House Maintenance fund was \$73,142. Hutchison House earnings from CFGP in 2025 were \$7,000.

Marilyn MacNaughton, Treasurer

Membership Committee Report

Membership during 2025 for the Peterborough Historical Society was 98, a decrease from last year's 117.

- 18 lifetime members + 2 honorary members (no longer an option)
- 73 individual and family members
- 5 institutional members

Membership is for the calendar year, January to December, which provides a seasonal cycle for renewals. After receiving a notice to renew in September, many of us still forget and require a gentle reminder in the following month or so. The PHS website allows members to renew online which makes renewal easier.

Hailey Lansley Membership Coordinator

The Publications Committee Report

The Publications Committee of the Peterborough Historical Society produced its 46th consecutive Occasional Paper this year. This year's paper was — Dennis Carter Edwards' "From Tap to Toilet: The Introduction of Water Works and Sewers to Peterborough". PHS members received a copy of the paper as part of their annual dues. Occasional Paper 47 for 2026 will be Geoffrey Hewitson's "When Rock and Roll came to Peterborough."

Michael Peterman, Professor Emeritus, Trent University Chair of Publications Committee

High School History Awards

Every year PHS provides a certificate and prize to each secondary school to the graduating student who receives the highest mark in history. (Sadly today, not all secondary schools offer courses in history each year.)

This year's winners were:

Adam Scott Collegiate Vocational Institute: Tyson Eftaxias

Crestwood Secondary School: Rowan Griffin

Kenner Collegiate Vocational Institute: Adam Sweeting and Gabriel Skima (IB)

St. Peter Catholic Secondary School: Rowan Campbell

Thomas A. Stewart Secondary School: Jacob Wren

Norwood District High School: Taylor Ruttan

Hailey Lansley, Coordinator

The Bulletin Report

There were 10 Bulletins produced this year – January, February, March, April, May, June (covers June, July and August), September, October and November. Each issue of the Bulletin is normally 4 pages, but could be expanded to 6 pages when needed. There are 40 Bulletins printed for mailing to members or for pick up by visitors to Hutchison House. Many of our members now receive an electronic copy of the Bulletin. Note since 2024, we have been in need of an editor for the Bulletin, please consider volunteering. Also please consider providing an article about history in Peterborough, It will be greatly appreciated.

Marilyn MacNaughton, Publisher

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