

Celebrating 40 years (1965-2005)

(Reprinted in edited form from the History of Bayfield)

BAYFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY – FORMED IN 1965

After the Huron County Historical Society was formed and had made provision for Branch Societies in its constitution, a group met at the home of Brigadier and Mrs. F.A. Clift, January 27, 1965, to organize the Bayfield Branch.

Those present were: Brigadier and Mrs. Clift, Mr. and Mrs. John Land, Mrs. R.H.F. Gairdner, Mrs. Carl Diehl, Mrs. Wm. Parker, Mrs. LeRoy Poth, Mrs. E.W. Oddleifson, Miss Ruth Hayman and Mr. Arthur Elliott. The first officers were: Chairman, Flory Oddleifson; Secretary-Treas., Vina Parker; and Archivist, Nan Howard

By the second meeting, held at the Oddleifsons', 22 had joined and many ideas were suggested for historical work that should be done before the necessary information was lost forever. In the first three years succeeding meetings were held at the Morgan Smiths', the Robin Hunters', the Carl Diehls', the LeRoy Poths', Elva Metcalfs', Canon and Mrs. F.J. Paulls', Helen Cobb's, Vivian Morton's, and the F.A.Clifts'.

January, 1975, saw the tenth anniversary celebrated with a special meeting, complete with a beautifully decorated anniversary cake. Mrs. Oddleifson re-elected on her term as chairman, Mrs. Morton spoke on accomplishments during her six years in the chair, and Brigadier Clift noted that the year 1975 was also the tenth anniversary of the re-incorporation of the village – and the 99th year of the original incorporation.

Those in office at that time, 1976, were: Mrs. Gwen Pemberton, Chairman; Miss Kay Reid, Secretary; and Mrs. Margaret Mayman, Treasurer.

BAYFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1976 – 1985

By Helen Owen

During its second decade, the Bayfield Historical Society has maintained its record for researching past history and ensuring that current events, its future history, are documented and retained in its files.

Towards the end of 1976, a proposal to separate from the Huron County Historical Society and seek affiliation with the Ontario Historical Society resulted in the preparation of a draft constitution, finally accepted by the membership in 1977. One of the advantages of this was the opportunity to obtain financial support. This proved most opportune as the Society had already been responsible for initiating and stressing the need for conservation. In February 1976 it was noted in the minutes that Mr. Nicholas Hill, Architect, had been

commissioned to prepare a Heritage District Plan towards the cost of which the Society subsequently contributed.

As an ongoing project the Society pursued its conservation project by advocating the formation of a Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee with Doris Hunter as the first chairman. It was a controversial matter as, while conservationists saw it as an essential step in order to maintain the architectural features of the Village, property owners likely to be affected did not all share this opinion.

It was not until April 1983 that the Village passed By-Law 194-83, designating a Heritage District Plan. Gwen Pemberton followed Doris Hunter as chairman of LACAC.

Another achievement of the Society has been the tremendous amount of work all performed voluntarily, which has gone into the cataloguing, sorting and preservation of archival material. The Archives Room was moved to form part of the new library in 1977. Much work had been done by the Society's first Archivist, Ethel Poth who had been responsible for the initiation of the project. When she resigned, Dorothy Cox took over and has continued with the demanding tasks since that time.

Under the new Constitution, the Society undertook the placement of plaques, a project handled by Prof. Herbert Kalbfleisch. Examples are to be seen on the Hut, and Albion Hotel, Little Inn, Richard Moore house and Lance's store.

The broad scope of subjects organized by programme committees have encompassed occupations, shipping, transport, family histories and recollections, so much of which coloured by humour and experience enlivened the past and recorded it for the future.

1986-1995

(Excerpts from executive and general meeting minutes)

A most ambitious project was conceived by the Society in 1984 with the decision to publish a Bayfield History book, under the direction of the Bayfield Historical Committee, the members being Chairman Ed Oddleifson, Gwen Pemberton, Dorothy Cox, Elva Metcalf, Ethel Poth and Milvena Erickson.

Final editing and printing of the script took place in 1986 with the book limited to 1000 copies being made available for sale beginning in May 1987 at a cost of \$20.00 per copy. During the first year of availability, 700 copies of the History book were sold, with virtually all available copies gone within 5 years.

Plaquing of the historic buildings of the village continued during the decade in co-operation with LACAC, notable plaquing included the Town Hall (1986), Gairdner House (1988), Stanbury House (1989), Village Guild (1992), Hovey's Store (1994).

Our Society membership fluctuated between 65 to 90 members, with our volunteers active in historic displays at the annual Fall Fair, Founder's Day and Society general meetings.

Acquisitions at the Archives for this period included the late Reg Francis' slides of Bayfield, the Turner clock, Lucy Diehl's letters and the Albert Woods folk art birds. The Society suffered a great loss in the death of volunteer archivist Dorothy Cox (1914-1994), whose tenure is recognized with a picture/plaque that was dedicated by the Cox family and hangs in a prominent location at the Archives Room. Fortunately, Rae McFarlane had assisted Miss Cox and was able to step in as interim volunteer Archivist.

1996-2005

(Excerpts from executive and general meeting minutes)

During the most recent decade our Historical Society has seen a rise in membership to an average of 90 plus per year, and in 1999 the executive initiated a new annual membership fee structure of \$5.00 per member, or \$8.00 per family, to meet increasing financial commitments.

Changes in the constitution of the Society which were made to acquire a Charitable tax number, also eliminated our organization from further involvement in plaquing of buildings. The last plaquings in co-operation with LACAC were placed at Trinity Anglican Church (1995), and the Society Charter Member plaque (1996) which resides at the Archives Room. (We maintain contact with LACAC through current representative Jim Quick).

The Archives under the direction of Rae McFarlane continued to search for a person with local historic knowledge to step in as archivist. The position was turned over in 2001 to Elaine Sturgeon, with Mrs. McFarlane being thanked for her years of dedicated service. Recent acquisitions for our records include documents from 50 years of Guiding in Bayfield and the Lioness Club records (that organization has ceased to function, and is sorely missed by the community).

Another major project for the Society commenced in 1996 with the repatriation to Bayfield of the Helen MacLeod II, a schooner originally built here in the 1920's. Our intent is to restore the ship when fundraising enables the purchase of materials required.

Our dedicated volunteers, who currently log a total of 3400 hours/year are now preparing for our 5th Annual Collector Exhibition in April. This event is our main fundraiser with proceeds gained being divided equally between the Society general account and the Helen MacLeod II restoration project.