



2020 Year End Report

PAHS Purpose:

To preserve and promote the heritage of Prince Albert and area for residents, visitors, and researchers to understand the past and inform the future

Thank you to our funders:



Dr. C.H. & Lenore Andrews

Philip E. West



President's Message

What a tumultuous year! Bizarre might be the best word to describe it. And yet, we came through it successfully.

The Prince Albert Historical Society began the year 2020 in a period of stability. We were, as we entered the year, in a strong financial position. Our Curator, Michelle Taylor, and our Office Administrator, Darlene Otet, were both continuing in their respective roles, and after altering the Museum Assistant position to that of a Museum Educator, we were able to retain Spencer Borotsik.

Change was continuing both in the areas of programming and renovations. Michelle travelled to Ottawa to accept an award from the Governor General on behalf of the Society. Fundraising plans were in place, which would allow us to proceed with the reconstruction of the Nisbet Church and the Blockhouse.

Then the pandemic arrived. March had come in like a lamb, but was definitely going to go out like a lion. The Province and the City implemented strict protocols which limited access to public facilities. Plans for several fundraisers, including a garage sale and A Night at the Museum, had to be postponed. A reprise of the previous year's successful historic homes tour had to be put on hold, while the plans for a garden tour were put into abeyance. All summer activities, from museum openings to walking tours, remained questionable.

Even though it appeared that the year would be a disaster, staff and volunteers were not willing to succumb to the COVID-19. For them, it became a challenge, something to be overcome through creativity.

The Historical Museum might have been closed to volunteers and visitors. What a great time to have the electricians come in and finish some over-due electrical work. Some of the new display units could be designed and created by Handy Hank.

The Board of Directors, in consultation with the Curator, approached the City and the Province to allow for expanded access to museums, implementing protocols that met the necessary public health requirements. Again, innovative approaches were required, but these approaches meant that we could provide virtual programming to a greater extent. We now not only have a website and Facebook page, but we have Instagram and YouTube. Our capability to provide programming has increased immensely.

With fewer demands over the summer, the staff and board members were able to spend time reviewing and updating our strategic plan.

Our cooperation with the City resulted in the placement of Indigenous signage on the riverbank, and once again, the Historical Society was asked to participate in the Multicultural Council's Canada Day Events.

In September, after the very limited summer season, we said goodbye to Spencer. Within weeks, we had hired his replacement. Joanna Wreakes began work in late September, virtually, from Toronto and was physically in place here in Prince Albert on October 5th. Our staff complement is as strong as ever as we leave 2020 behind.

Financially, the Historical Society is in a strong position. Due to the efforts of our Curator and Office Administrator, as well as the Board, we are less reliant on the City for our funding. The necessary finances and plans are in place to reconstruct the Blockhouse in the summer of 2021. As a result of obtaining matching

grants, the Andrews' bequest, which has paid for much of the necessary renovations to the Historical Museum, remains only partly spent.

Although 2020 was a difficult year, the Society is much stronger as a result of its challenges. We are indeed fortunate to have such a dedicated and creative staff, and such active and loyal volunteers.



Fred Payton

Curator's Message

2020 has been an interesting year! Thank you for working with us and being patient as we all move forward to figure things out during the Covid restrictions. The Society and its museums have been the break people have needed while life has been stressful. I am very lucky to have an understanding board and membership to allow me to work flexible hours when everything shut down in March. It allowed me to be at my best while I was in the office.

I appreciate each one of you, the Society's members, for the contributions you have made, or currently make to the development and sustainability of the organization. My job would be completely different if you were not here doing the work you do.

January 2020 seems more than a year ago, we had big plans to fundraise and be in the public eye more, however things did not go as planned. All events that were planned will move into 2021 and 2022 when life has become more settled and we can all get out more.

Even though Historical Society's tend to look backward, we must look forward to continue the growth of the organization and the momentum and visibility we have gained in the City. I expect that 2021 will be a good year for the Historical Society and I cannot wait to see what happens next.



Michelle Taylor
Manager/Curator

Board of Directors

Current

President- Fred Payton

1st Vice President- John Thompson

2nd Vice President- Ken Guedo

Treasurer- Todd Robertson

Secretary- Mary Brown

Shirley Swain

Morley Harrison

Lorraine Brassard

Nancy Pardoe

Morris Yelland

Connie Gerwing

Staff

Manager/Curator

Michelle Taylor

Office Administrator

Darlene Otet

Museum Educator

Spencer Borotsik (January to August)

Joanna Wreakes (September to December)

2020 Seasonal Staff

(r) Returning

Nigel Town (r)

Kaitlyn Fossen (r)

Taylor Strauss (r)

Hayley Remus

Zachary Paziuk

Lauren Town

Mikaela LeBlanc

Kayla Abrametz

Shyloh Straychuk-Klimek

Cierra Simonot

Erin Paulhus

PAHS Committees

Audit

John Thompson- Chair
Morley Harrison

Building

John Thompson- Chair

Collections

Ken Guedo- Chair
Jamie Benson
Donna Nutter
Shirley Swain

Human Resources

Lorraine Brassard- Chair
Fred Payton
John Thompson

Marketing

Nancy Pardoe- Chair

Nominations

Les Anderson

SK Archaeological Society Rep.

John Thompson

Governance

John Thompson
Morris Yelland

Programming

Connie Gerwing- Chair
Morley Harrison
Shirley Hamilton
Shannon Ruszkowski
Fred Payton

Membership

Mary Brown- Chair
Les Anderson
Doris Lund

Fundraising

Connie Gerwing- Chair
Deb Honch
John Thompson
Mary Brown
Fred Payton

Bequest

Todd Robertson- Chair
Ken Guedo

Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of any organization and the PAHS is no different. 2020 has provided many challenges and they have affected our membership greatly. From March 17th to mid May the museums were closed to the volunteers due to worries about the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time only board members were allowed access for short periods of time. The hiatus proved to be a real challenge for all of us- still eight months later we have not seen the complete return of our volunteers. One hopes 2021 brings a return to normalcy!

Because of all the Provincial Health restrictions that continue to be in place, we have been unable to have our regular events; the Crocus Tea being the main social event for the membership and is where we usually see the bulk of PAHS membership purchases and renewals. The Society's membership has shrunk because of this year's pandemic restrictions. We have 70 paid members and 9 life members. Of our paid members, there are approximately 10 new supporters of the Society. In September, we lost long time member, former Board president, and museum manager Ron Smith. He passed away at the age of 86 in Regina.

We have also seen a significant drop in the number of volunteers that have helped at the museum; this is of course due to the lack of events and activities held at the museum where many people help for specific functions. However, this has not been accompanied by a drop in volunteer hours. In 2019, there were 50 volunteers who contributed 3,667 hours of service, while in 2020, 31 volunteers provided the Society over 3,300 hours which equals approximately 82 weeks of full time work!

THANK YOU for spending your time at the museum and keeping our organization healthy and vibrant in this year of challenges.

Committee Reports

Personnel

Submitted by Lorraine Brassard

Due to the Covid-19 shutdown in March, the committee worked with Michelle to allow very flexible working hours. These hours continued until August when childcare facilities reopened.

Spencer Borotsik submitted his resignation and left our employ on September 2, 2020. The personnel committee worked with the Manager/Curator to develop an updated job description and job posting for the Museum Educator position. Joanna Wreakes was hired and started on September 21, 2020. She worked remotely for the first two weeks then started in person on October 5. Joanna comes to us from Edmonton, Alberta and has proven to be a great asset to the museum. An employment contract was signed with Joanna in November.



During the interview process, it was found that providing benefits would be a decision making factor for potential educators. The committee pursued entering the Chamber of Commerce Benefits plan. The health benefit package was set up for our three employees and the benefits started January 1, 2021.

Michelle because of length of service, who started working for the Society in 2009, has now 4 weeks holiday effective January 1, 2021. For the last 4 years, Michelle has been working 32 hours a week, and effective February 1, 2021 she will now be working 40 hours per week. The Manager/Curator job description and contract were also updated.

Building

Submitted by John Thompson

Blockhouse Update

The Prince Albert Historical Society (the Society) met with City representatives twice to go over plans and to find out what requirements we had to complete before approval would be granted. In conversations with the city, some items were changed to our advantage.

The removal of the Totem Pole in 2019 meant that the Bandstand would not have to be moved since it would have been at the Society's cost. Also the City's Chief Building Inspector stated that if the plans were changed slightly, moving the Blockhouse to 10 metres (33 feet) from the Nisbet Log Church we would not be required to put any fireproofing in either building to comply with fire building codes. There is adequate space in the buildings location to allow for this. This is a cost saving for us in constructing the building.

The spacing difference means that plans require some redrafting, as well as more detail, including roof truss design, foundation design and general details of the building construction. To save us potential changes in the future the city advised that we submit both building plans for review and approval. All plans will require an Engineer's Approval stamp. When the Society receives the plans from the drafting company, we will submit them to the city with a development permit.

The electrical service to the buildings will be by underground cable; it was decided earlier that solar panel were too expensive and would add to the roof cost due to the extra weight.

Upon the receipt of the engineer approved plans, the Society will inform our building contractor Darryl Sande that he can proceed to have logs harvested to replace the rotten logs that had to be discarded. The logs will be seasoned, (allowed to dry out and be debarked), in preparation for reconstruction in the late summer early fall of 2021.

The Society has made the decision to reconstruct the Blockhouse in 2021 to show progress to the public on our plans. The Society has adequate funds available to complete the Blockhouse, which is the smaller of the two log buildings.

Governance

The governance committee was inactive this year due to the pandemic. Work will continue in 2021 on policy and bylaw review.

Marketing

Submitted by Nancy Pardoe

The Marketing Committee saw reduced activity in 2020, due mostly to restrictions and closures as a result of the pandemic. Tourism Prince Albert did not distribute a Visitor Guide this year, so the ads and write-up we would usually contribute were cancelled. Advertising in the Prairies North magazine was also cancelled, due to uncertainty as to when our museums would open.

The marketing committee and manager/curator met with a radio-advertising consultant for the Beach101. We will look into purchasing advertisements for specific projects in 2021.

Marketing initiatives that did proceed in 2020 included:

- **Magnet Signs:** A portable sign was rented from mid-July to mid-September and placed on Marquis Road east of the Tourism Centre. This sign was updated monthly to advertise our museums opening period and our September opening times.
- **Feather Flags:** Four 10-foot feather flags were designed and created. Three of the flags will be used during the summer opening season, with one flag posted at each of our locations. Each flag has a background picture of the museum or museums at that location. The fourth flag will be used during the off-season to promote our special openings. The flags should help increase our visibility and draw more visitors.
- **Event Banner:** One smaller change was to update our PAHS event banner to reflect our current email address.



Programming and Exhibitions

Submitted by Connie Gerwing

The programming committee began 2020 with a number of projects planned but all of them were seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the shutdown happened, we did open during the school break week in February and worked with the museum educator on a theme of family trees.

We did not set up our planned summer display nor did we open on Remembrance Day. We did put up a Christmas display during the month of December. This consisted of several trees, lights and displays of our collection of ornaments and those of several Historical Society members. The museum educator added some crafts that could be done at home and a story time was scheduled as well.

We worked on a new display for the steamboat collection, which is now near the fire truck. The signs are still in development. We also continued to work on the Connaught Room changes and setting up our Indigenous displays there.

We completed a draft of the Terms of Reference for our committee and changed the name to include exhibits to better reflect what we do on a regular basis. Two committee members took the Museum's Association of

Saskatchewan class called Museums and Education, which is part of their Certificate Program in Community Museum Studies.

We are hoping for a better 2021.

Fundraising

Submitted by Connie Gerwing

Fundraising activities were also severely affected by the pandemic. We planned a major event called A Night at the Museum for early April which had to be cancelled. To continue with the success of the historic home tour in 2019, two more were planned for 2020; a garden tour was also being planned for the summer. Unfortunately, these were cancelled but we hope these activities can go ahead in 2021.

We did receive donations of \$9,843.91 most of which were given for the reconstruction of the Church and Blockhouse which should start in summer of 2021. A second garage sale was held in early October with proper Covid procedures in place, including limited visitors and one-way traffic through the facility. The items in this garage sale were the final things that were found during the reorganization process or were items the Society no longer had use for, for example office equipment. This sale raised a total of \$1230.55.

A raffle was held in the fall, Society members donated all the prizes. The winners were drawn in mid-December and \$1385 was raised.

Saskatchewan Archaeological Society

Chapter Representative: John Thompson

As a chapter of the SAS, the Historical Society is required to have five people who are members of both societies. At this time, the Historical Society has six. If you are interested in finding out more about the SAS please contact John Thompson.

Building Upgrades/Maintenance

The City of Prince Albert, in agreement with the Historical Society, looks after the care and maintenance of the museum buildings. With the exception of one project, the work described below was completed by the City.

Our buildings received regular maintenance and building checks that were completed by City of Prince Albert maintenance staff and the Society's staff and volunteers. The projects listed here are some of the most noticeable for those not in the museums on a daily basis.

In March, all lights at the Historical Museum were changed to LED; this included all display lights as well. This has made a huge difference to the work areas. Volunteers are no longer straining under the fluorescent lights. New outlets were installed on the south side of the Connaught Room so we can now have a variety of displays (PAHS project). Prior to opening in July, the City installed the updated plaques at the John and Olive Diefenbaker Museum. Unfortunately, it was not until the fall that landscaping was completed around it. Over the summer months, the Rotary Museum of Police of Corrections and the Evolution of Education museum were re-shingled.

An item that does not have to do too much with our maintenance, but with the Historical Museum building, electricians came and tied in the new electricity for the bandstand through the west sidewall. Care was taken around the artefacts and nothing was affected. The City of PA. will pay this work and the future electrical costs associated with the buildings.

There was some concern about the Historical Museum in April with the river break up... the water levels have not been that high at break up in recent memory. The museum was not affected but the riverbank was!



Diefenbaker House plaques

Administration

January to March 17

The first 10 weeks of 2020 started out as any year would, little did we know things would change on March 17. In January, the Manager/Curator travelled to Ottawa to accept out Honourable Mention for the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Community Programming. The Society was also asked to host two separate work placements/practicums at the Historical Museums. One student came from the Dumont Technical Institute for a 2-week placement and the second, which was put on hold due to Covid, was a 500-hour practicum from Athabasca University in the Heritage Resource Management program. We hope to move forward with this practicum in 2021. Both placements are based in the collections storage area.

How Covid-19 affected the PAHS

The Covid-19 pandemic luckily has not affected the Society too negatively; we were able to have our AGM, days before City facilities were closed, unlike many organizations. Facilities closed to the public on March 17, volunteers were asked to refrain from coming in as well. A week later board members were allowed back on a limited basis. At this time, Darlene worked only 1 day a week because there was little work for her to do, Michelle worked a modified schedule of 2 or 3 days a week in the office to fit around her household schedule because of the school shut down. This arrangement continued until the museums opened in July. Spencer, who remained working full-time, kept up with daily operations when Michelle was out of the office.

It was not until mid-May that volunteers were allowed to come back regularly. The museums remained closed to the public. It was in this time that the Society was asked to provide an updated budget for summer operations to City administration, with three reopening options/budgets from our normal 16-week season. In each option, we included rehiring the returning interpreters and the museum educator position. We knew we would be reopening, the only question was when.

At the beginning of June, we rehired three interpreters to help with getting the museum ready before we could potentially open for the season. Museums, galleries, etc. were notified that we were in Phase 4.2 of the provincial reopening plan, which meant the earliest the museums could open was June 29. Prior to that date new Covid protocols were put into place including capacity limits to allow for social distancing and additional cleaning/sanitizing solutions were purchased. The decision was made that the PA Museums would open on July 10, giving us a week to prepare and train the summer interpreters. However, because the students were given little notice about when we would open, training week was a bit odd. Some hiring was also completed during this week. When the museums reopened, we did so with slightly modified hours (9:30 am to 4:30pm) giving us time to clean and sanitize at the beginning and end of every day.

The museums were open to the public for 7 weeks (July 10 to August 28). There was a large decrease in the number of visitors to each museum. The decision was made by Heejung and Junsoek Park with the support of the Society Board, not to reopen Heejung's House in the tearoom. It was missed by all who knew about it.

In the fall, the Society planned for a new normal, which has seen fewer people to the museums but an increase in our online presence thanks to our new museum educator, Joanna. Since March, we have had one in person membership meeting which took place in September. That meeting, held outside the museum, was not particularly well attended and the members present decided there should not be any more in person meetings until at least January 2021. In the absence of meetings, staff have started to put out monthly newsletters to keep the membership up to date with the big happenings of the Society.

Financial impact of Covid

The Society this year has taken advantage of funding from the Canadian government for businesses and organizations affected by the pandemic. Wage subsidies were calculated only for Michelle and Darlene as Spencer was not on Society payroll. Darlene applied for the Temporary Wage Subsidy (TWS) for a total of \$1490 for a 3-month period and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) for a total of \$33,445 from March 15 to end December. The CEWS is slated to continue into 2021. The Society applied for the Canadian Heritage Emergency Support Fund, receiving \$18,070, this amount was based on our budget for 2019. The Board decided to apply for the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) loan of \$40,000 to help pay for expenses we cannot

defer. This loan has a 25% forgiveness if the rest is paid by December 31, 2022. These programs have helped the Society maintain financial stability while there has been reduced income.

Grants update

Even though we were closed to the public for almost four months, staff and volunteers have been busy! Early in the year, we applied for our usual summer interpreter grants- Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) and Young Canada Works (YCW). This year YCW granted two positions for an initial total of about \$10,000, later in the year they added to that and we received another \$1000. The CSJ granted four positions for a total of \$14,600. This money goes to the City to pay the summer interpreters. Because of this surplus in recent years, we have been able to have a third staff member during the winter.

The fall of 2020 would normally be the time we prepare the SaskCulture grant for museum operations. Due to Covid-19, SaskCulture decided not to make museums write the big grant but would ask for an additional interim report. All museums will be receiving the same support as what was granted in the last grant cycle (2019-2020). This means for the Society, we will be given \$22,000 for 2021!

A small project grant was applied for from the Saskatchewan Council for Archives and Archivists Institutional Grant Program in late 2019 and we were notified in early 2020 that we were successful. This is a \$5000 grant that we used to purchase a map cabinet and microfilm cabinet to properly store the material.

Ongoing administrative projects

Society members and staff remain active on City project committees including the Indigenous Riverbank signage project and the Municipal Cultural Action Plan. The museum provided information for historical information signs for the bandstand and the Ella Muzzy splash pad. A board member sits as a representative for the Prince Albert Urban Indigenous Coalition and until early in the year, a Society member was a representative on the Prince Albert Tourism Board.

Early in the year, the Board knew they had to revisit the Society's strategic plan. The plan we were working from was set to expire in 2020. The Board decided on Kinzel Cadrin and Assoc. from Saskatoon, Ruth Kinzel, our facilitator has worked with many museum and cultural organizations. She knew how to provide what we wanted in a timely manner. In July, the Board met with Ruth at the Arts Centre for an afternoon of planning. Michelle was able to update the plan and it was presented to the Board in late August. It is attached for your information.

In the fall, Fred Payton and Michelle Taylor made their annual external agency budget presentation to City Council. It was decided by the board that the Museum Educator payroll costs would be taken on by the Historical Society rather than asking for additional funding from the City. This will allow the Society to become more self-sustaining in the future.

Volunteer and Staff Training

2020 was a great year for education because we were not able to gather in large groups, so training sessions were offered virtually. This meant there was less travelling so staff and Society members could attend more sessions. Michelle and Spencer were able to take part in one in-person event, the Saskatchewan Heritage Forum in Saskatoon in February.

During the first few months of the pandemic, there was a hiatus for most organizations. The Museums Association of Saskatchewan (MAS) held their AGM virtually in June, while all other museum network meetings were postponed until the fall. Michelle attended the virtual AGM.

Both staff and volunteers took part in various virtual webinars provided by the National Trust, MAS biweekly chats and certificate courses, the Saskatchewan Council for Archives and Archivists, and the City of Prince Albert. All staff and one board member participated in diversity training through the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan provided by the City of Prince Albert.

MAS asked the Manager/Curator to provide a one-hour presentation about our Re:Org process in March. This was pre-recorded in the museum, but was meant to be delivered in person around the province. She was also asked to teach two of the online Certificate program classes in the fall.

Programming and Outreach

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the programming and outreach has looked different this year with an increased focus on digital content. Spencer Borotsik served as Museum Educator until September 2, with new educator Joanna Wreakes beginning on September 21.

In the first three months of the year, the seniors outreach program continued at both Herb Bassett Home and Pineview Terrace. In total 161 people took part in seven programs. Though we have been unable to continue with these programs due to the pandemic, we have been able to maintain relationships with care homes throughout our region in other ways. After updating a slideshow of archival agriculture images this was shared with the Parkland Integrated Health Centre in Shellbrook.

In February 2020, the Historical Museum was open with daily programming offered for Family Day Week to encourage visitors during the February school break. During the week, we had 178 visitors; museum entry was FREE on Family Day, our most successful day of this week with 94 visitors. 26 people participated in the related family tree activity. Other programs offered this week included hand weaving, “behind-the-scenes” tours, a trivia contest, and hands-on artifact handling.

Spencer developed a number of new school programs during 2020, which included “Mapping Prince Albert History”, “Canadian Politics with Diefenbaker”, “Life as a Fur Trader”, and “Why Here: Stories Along the North

Saskatchewan". These were all designed to be carried out within the Historical Museum or Diefenbaker House so unfortunately we have not yet had an opportunity to run these programs. These programs are also being adapted so that they can be run by teachers in their classrooms.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, our Culture Days 2020 programming was a success. On Saturday, September 27, four Riverbank walking tours were held, free of charge, led by local Knowledge Keepers Leo Omani, Leah Dorian, and Curtis Breaton. These tours ended with participants having access to the Historical Museum. Through this program, we were able to highlight the new Riverbank Indigenous History Signs as well as the new exhibits in the Connaught Room; 27 people participated in the tours. For Culture Days we also developed an outdoor Prince Albert history scavenger hunt and special Facebook photo frames so people could participate by taking pictures.

Though we were lucky to be able to open for the (albeit shorter) summer season, we were able to increase our online and digital presence. One way this happened was through a small video tour series produced by Katelyn Fossen and Taylor Strauss, two fabulous summer students. They created short videos introducing aspects of each museum. They also collaborated with Fred Payton to create a series of local ghost story videos, which we published in October and were very popular across social media! Our increased online presence has continued into the fall with the creation of a Prince Albert Historical Society YouTube channel, and more consistent social media posts. Michelle and Joanna worked together to create a calendar of planned content with some recurring themes – one of the most popular has been Femme Friday, where prominent women from Prince Albert are featured.

Joanna has worked on updating our outreach school programming this fall, starting with the World War suitcase kit that was already prepared. These updates included formally deaccessioning all artifacts contained in the kit into an Education Collection and redoing the lesson plans and contextual information. We were lucky to purchase a laminator with which we were able to laminate all included photographs and contextual sheets students may be handling to make disinfecting easier. Finally, with the realities of the pandemic, we included a guideline for cleanliness and safety – including that disinfectant is NOT to be used on artifacts! We also created an online survey for Saskatchewan educators to better understand what types of outreach they are looking for from the PAHS. Joanna is continuing to analyze the results of this survey and apply the responses to future programming creation and updates.

Before shutting down the museums to visitors in the spring, we hosted tours with the Family Treatment Centre, PACI Photography Class, Wesmor High School, and Sask. Polytech. During the fall and early winter, we hosted a variety of community groups for tours in all museums. These groups included the PA Group Home Society, the Older Workers' Program, PAMC, and different homeschooling families. Big Brothers Big Sisters PA also purchased 35 passes (15 adult and 20 youth passes) to distribute to their members in lieu of a tour. Without regular school class visits, our tour numbers were way down; we had 11 tours total during 2020 as compared to 95 in 2019.

Working with the Programming & Exhibitions Committee, we were able to produce a number of Covid-friendly programming opportunities in December. Using a cookbook from the collection, Joanna tested two holiday cookie recipes, filmed instructional videos and shared the recipes on our YouTube channel, social media, and website. 38 paper wreath-making kits were prepared for families to use at home, of these 35 were collected. Ten memorable Christmas stories were collected, written by kids and adults from PA, and put together in a

bookbinding project spearheaded by Morley Harrison. Finally, the Sergeant Room was decorated to the nines with Christmas décor! We planned to offer family-friendly Christmas storytelling three afternoons a week, but only one group partook. In a “normal” year, we think this would be more successful!



Joanna and Lisa Risom from CTV after an interview!



Culture Days Riverbank walking tour with Leo Omani.

Bill Smiley Archives

The Bill Smiley Archives remains a stable force within the Historical Society. The archives area have only seen small changes in 2020, which include the purchase of the map cabinet, microfilm cabinet and a custom work table/oversized map storage unit, all put into the ‘map room’. These additions will allow for the better care and preservation of the items in our collection.

The archives volunteers have kept busy this year, even with the museum closing for a time, requests have remained steady with twenty more than last year, showing us that the interest in Prince Albert’s history is growing.

The archives database has grown... 598 documents were added, totaling 19,222, and 353 photographs were added, totaling 8,715. However, these are just the physical photographs that were entered into the database; this does not include the Daily Herald negatives or the digital photos. Donations have slowed but there were an additional 794 digital photographs taken by Gordon Barnett of the businesses and business street scenes in Prince Albert. We now have set of photographs to compare with the old in our collection.

A project of note is the investigation of the digitization of the Prince Albert Daily Herald microfilm reels. A proposed partnership between the JMC Public Library and the Society is moving forward to have the entire collection scanned and made available to the public. We are hoping the project details can be finalized in 2021, with digitization occurring in 2021 and 2022.

One interesting request completed in 2020 was regarding a skating race around the Minto arena in 1953. Youth involved included Jim Neilson, Garry Takacs, John Swystun, and Dale oak. This led to a larger discussion of school sponsored sports teams in the City. The archives volunteers spent quite a bit of time combing the Daily Herald newspapers, as the person asking could not remember the date in which the race occurred.

Visitation and Statistics

To say that Covid has affected people going out is an understatement; the museums visitation/usage numbers are dismal as compared to 2019. The Society though is still positive about the 2020 numbers. We, unlike so many small town museums, were able to open in the summer and we feel extremely fortunate to do so. We had a short 7-week season as compared to 15 in previous years. There were no downtown events to boost our numbers. At the Rotary Museum of Police and Corrections and the Evolution of Education museum, there was the added problem of Prince Albert Tourism closing for the summer months. After the initial Covid shutdown, they decided not to reopen; our interpreters were intrusted with a key to the building for weekend use. The Society is hopeful that 2021 will allow for a longer season with more visitors coming to the museums!

Summer Visitation (July 10 to August 28)

	2019 Total	2020
Historical Museum	5,328	425
Diefenbaker House	964	258
Police & Corrections	657	192
Evolution of Education	554	158
Total	7,503	1,033

The 2019 open season was May 22 to August 31 and 2020 was open July 10 to August 28th.

Overall, we have seen a sizable drop in visitation numbers; we know there were fewer people travelling this year and less people going to inside attractions. We must pay attention to the social media numbers; our total engagement, those people actively participating with a post by liking, commenting, or sharing has increased. These are good numbers to follow up on because these are the people who are most likely to visit the museums in general.

2019 vs 2020 Museum Usage Data

Users	2019	Total 2020
Visitors/Meetings	10,352	2,178
Researchers	41	28
Archive Requests	244	264
Group Tours	95	11
Volunteers Occasions	1,688	1,558
Facebook *	28,474 (947,669)	30,334 (569,938)
Total Museum Use	40,799	34,362

*Facebook numbers calculated by the number of engaged users and post reach (in brackets) for that months posts. It does not take into effect the engaged users on past posts, which at times outnumber the monthly posts. In December 2020, Instagram statistics are included.

Summary

Looking back on the year, January 2020 seems more than a year ago, as the world has completely changed around us. The Historical Society weathered the Covid storm better than others in the province did. Our museums were able to open this summer with the support of the City of Prince Albert and we must look forward to 2021 with optimism. Thank you for your continued support of the Society.