

Rockport Navigation Company by Mathew Thivierge

In the late 1800s, many steamers were built to transport visitors from train stations to the large, newly built, Thousand Islands resorts. This transportation gave birth to the tourist industry, and sightseeing boat tours, that are still popular today. It was also the only way to cross the Canadian/American border at that time, in this region. One of the many companies established to take advantage of the demand, was the Rockport Navigation Company. It was created by John and Robert Carnegie in 1877, to run ferries along the St. Lawrence River between Alexandria Bay and Clayton, NY to Gananoque and Kingston.

The Canadian Red Ensign that flew from the stern of Carnegie ship S.S. Waubic, is on display at the Museum. This was the unofficial flag of Canada from 1921- 1965, and was also a civil ensign (a flag used to denote the nationality of civilian ships). The S.S. Waubic, built in 1901 in Collingwood, ON, originally for the Northern Navigation Company, was purchased by the Rockport Navigation Company in 1921. The steamer was built with a wood-sheathed hull designed for protection from shallow waters and rocky bottoms. The steamer operated as the ferry for the Kingston-Cape Vincent route. The S.S. Waubic also sailed on moonlight cruises among the Thousand Islands with special stops at Wolfe Island. She was with the Rockport Navigation Company until being sold to A.R. & V.C. Irvine in 1934. In 1937, the Waubic was again sold to Captain J. Earl McQueen and brought to Lake Erie. While undergoing a refit, she caught fire and was badly damaged. She was rebuilt at the Muir Bros. dry-dock in Port Dalhousie and renamed Erie Isle. She was sold again in 1943 to Northumberland Ferries Ltd. in Charlottetown, PEI. Under the name Prince Nova, she served as a ferry until November 1959, when she caught fire at Pictou, Nova Scotia, and was damaged beyond repair.

Another object in the Museum Collection is the valise of Capt. Robert H. Carnegie. A member of the Carnegie family carried this leather case with them, on whichever vessel they served. It would likely have contained important documents, used on a daily basis, as they steamed along the St. Lawrence.

The Thousand Islands International Bridge was completed in 1938, and this resulted in the demise of the steamer ferry service. International, year-round, travel was now significantly faster and easier. The Carnegies lowered ferry rates to keep the service in operation, but this was not enough, and they closed the business in 1940, coinciding with the end of the elegant passenger ship and train era. On occasion, the Waubic served as a freight ship to ports, however, the opening of the Bridge put too much strain on that industry as well. The Carnegie captains served on other vessels for many years following the closure of the Rockport Navigation Co., including the Miss Kingston, the largest tour boat in the area during the mid-20th Century.



Archives from the Carnegie Collection



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WINTER NEWSLETTER 2021



1000 Islands History Museum Welcomes Winter!

As we are putting together our next 5 year plan for the museum, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the surveys over the summer. One thing that really seems to need clarification is where our financial support comes from. While there is a priority to ensure our messaging regarding our mandate is clear, there seems to be a need to state our funding sources right now, so here it is:

- Government of Canada (various projects, students, COVID funds): \$200,000**
- Town of Gananoque (operations, Civic Collection care, App support): \$70,000**
- *This amount doesn't include the rent free space we have the privilege to occupy!
- The Child Foundation: \$25,000**
- Private Donations & Fundraiser: \$25,000**
- Memberships & Admissions: \$19,000**
- Government of Ontario (Heritage Organization Development Grant): \$1,545**

It's through this support that we are able to offer our spaces up to host events, as well as run activities through the Museum, in bigger town led events. We were also able to help out the local community program called "The Berm Out", by providing free Wi-Fi on the Waterfront for the local community, and visitors.



Thank you!
Joanne van Droumel



Volunteer Board of Directors

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Layne's Message



Layne Larsen, Chair

"With Ontario's vaccination rate approaching 90%, and restrictions easing, the Museum should be back to normal operations soon. In the meantime, I congratulate our Executive Director and her staff, who except for the few months when everything was 'locked down', implemented the protocols to keep the Museum open to the public when most other museums in the region simply shuttered their doors."

Festival of Lights



Once again, this December, heartwarming lights will chase away the gathering gloom! Come and celebrate the changing of the seasons with the 1000 Islands History Museum, as they turn on over 3000 Christmas lights this winter. The lights are free for all to enjoy, and social distancing is easy along the waterfront trail.

As the loneliness of social distancing threatens to add a deeper “chill” this year, the 1000 Islands History Museum has decided to go “all out” with their Christmas lights. Red, white, green, and multicoloured strands will robe the balconies and bushes in light, while spotlights bathe the building in a cheerful glow. The Griswold’s would be proud!

The Museum is proud to be a part of the Town of Gananoque ‘Festival of Lights’ initiative. As a beautiful waterfront attraction open year-round in Gananoque, the lights will welcome newcomers and locals alike. The Museum would like to thank Celebrate Ontario, FedDev Canada, the Gananoque & 1000 Islands Chamber of Commerce, and the Town of Gananoque, without whose support this project would not have been possible.

The Town of Gananoque Civic Collection Presents: THE LONGEST NIGHT EXHIBIT

Winter Solstice, also known as the ‘Longest Night’, has been acknowledged and celebrated for thousands of years, by many different cultures around the world. This year, the Museum would like to tip our hats to the darkness, and feature some of the less sunny objects in the collection. These interesting items were donated to the Town of Gananoque by residents past and present, who wanted to share their memories with you. Enjoy this walk-by window exhibit at the 1000 Islands History Museum this winter.



Taking a Step Back in Time

Over the last many months, staff members at the 1000 Islands History Museum have been hard at work developing COVID-friendly programming for the community. This has resulted in the development of Gananoque’s own heritage walking tour app. Using archival photos, the walking tour allows you to see the shifting or constant use of Gananoque’s built heritage over the last 200 years. Participants are also able to learn about the local stories and legends that make our heritage buildings come alive in an entertaining, engaging, and interactive manner.

“The development of the tour was an exciting time at the Museum, and it was a very fun project to work on. We got to comb through many archival photos, research interesting stories and legends, and talk with community members about the project, as well as listen to their own experiences in many of Gananoque’s heritage structures. Many people were and continue to be very supportive of the project!” – Mathew Thivierge

One of the most exciting features of the walking tour is the slider function. This allows you to see the transition of a historic building from its original use in Gananoque to its current use. In some cases, participants can see complete changes in buildings on one site!

In the future, the Museum will look to expand to the walking tour to other locations in Gananoque, including the west and east ends of town. We are also looking into eventually developing themed tours and may dig further into the history of some buildings.

If you have a story, photos, or any information you would like to share with the Museum about Gananoque’s heritage, please reach out to us. Apps are free to download from both the Apple and Google Play stores.

Check out the web-based tour here: <https://gananoque.stqry.app/> and start exploring!



Museum Coordinator, Mathew, created fun interactive ‘before and ‘after’ features on the app



New Exhibit for 2022: ‘Unmasking Influenza’

May to November

The world’s deadliest influenza pandemic — known as the Spanish Flu — swept across Canada between 1918 and 1919. With no effective vaccine or treatment available, the virus infected Canadians living in cities, towns, and farms. Approximately 55,000 Canadians died; most of the casualties were young adults. This display examines the lasting impact of the influenza pandemic in Canada — and asks whether we’re prepared for the next one. The display was developed by Canadian Geographic Enterprises, in collaboration with the Museum of Health Care at Kingston. We are presenting this travelling exhibit from Ingenium in 2022, supplemented with local stories and objects. ‘Pandemic Then And Now’, created this year with community churches, will also be a feature.

We will also have one new permanent exhibit on the second level. We offer services in both English and French.



Behind the Scenes 2020



Shakoor, Adam, Isaac, Rachel, Zane, & Maya

News from the Town of Gananoque’s Historic Collection

Over the past months, Collections staff have been very busy. We were extremely lucky to welcome the help of four great summer students and one collections volunteer. We were also happy to receive two major grants, the Museum Assistance Program – Collection Management grant and the Library and Archives Canada Documentary Heritage Communities Program grant. The first has allowed us to inventory, catalogue, and preserve the Town of Gananoque Civic Collection’s large textile and historic clothing collection. The second has allowed us to continue preserving the Civic Collection’s vast Archival Collection. In addition to providing physical care and storage for the archives, we have begun a large digitization project to create digital copies of the archival items. This will help preserve the information contained in the archives for future generations and make the archival items more accessible to the public. These projects have also allowed us to put more textiles and archival items on display in our current exhibits. Over the past few months 79 artifacts from Civic Collection have been added to new and updated exhibits. This has helped us raise awareness of the Town of Gananoque Civic Collection and allowed the objects to finally be viewed and enjoyed by the public.

From the front desk

Now that we have moved into the shoulder season, the Front Desk at the Museum is much quieter. The Canadian Empress and Kawartha Voyageur made their last visits to the Museum in late October. However, we continue to welcome the visitors that stop by the Museum.

In reviewing this successful year, despite the continued challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Museum would be remiss in not thanking our students for the amazing work that they did this season! Anna and Briar were an integral part of the Museum staff this season and provided top-notch visitor services to the thousands of visitors that walked through the Museum doors this year. They were also very helpful and enthusiastic about participating in the development of Museum projects, especially the new Gananoque Heritage Walking Tour App and assisting in the development of the Museum’s end-of-year presentations. Briar is continuing to work at the Museum for a few days a week as part of the Young Canada Works Program in between attending high school, while Anna has returned to her studies at McGill University. We wish them all the best in their studies!



Steve, Briar, Mathew, & Anna

The Museum continues to host our climate change exhibit “To What Degree? Canada in a Changing Climate” from Ingenium that also features supplementary artifacts from the Town of Gananoque Civic Collection. The exhibit will be on display at the Museum until December.

Board Member Profile: Brian Knudsen



Brian William Knudsen, born November 22nd, 1946 in Belleville Ontario, has been married to his university sweetheart. Lynn, for 52 years. They happily raised a daughter Allison, and two sons Erik and Gregory.

After attending Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, Brian worked for a short time at the Royal Bank in Ottawa before joining the investment industry. He became a director/officer for Midland Walwyn, then Merrill Lynch, which later became Wood Gundy. At 26yrs old, he was elected to Belleville City Council, and over the years he has supported many and varied efforts of charities, causes and hospitals.

Brian first became familiar with the 1000 Islands as a 10yr old boy, when his uncle would bring his cruiser up from the Bay of Quinte to stay in the islands. They would keep the large boat at the Gananoque Marina. Later, he loved to cottage here and stay at the Seven Gables, then they built their own cottage on Flying Mallard Island. Brian has a genuine love of the natural beauty and diversity to be found in the islands. He’s also very interested in the history, because it shows what went on here. He says, ‘The 1000 Islands History Museum is a wonderful place to share this region’s story, and I’m happy to bring my ideas and support to them. It’s hard to go forward, if you don’t know where you’ve been.’

In Memory of Bill Stallen

Sadly, last month we learned that Bill Stallen died on October 1, 2021. Throughout his hospitalization, his wife, Penny, was at his side. Both Penny and Bill served on our Summer Gala Committees in past years and were responsible, in part, for our success. We send our condolences to his family and his memory will live on.



Bill with 1000IHM’s, Liz Quinn, in 2019