

GRAVENHURST ARCHIVES

OUR MANDATE: *To collect, preserve and share the history of
Gravenhurst*

WHO ARE WE?

- A totally independent and volunteer organization of people interested in the history of Gravenhurst and its people
- Founded in 1978 by Marion and Cyril Fry, Cecil Porter following 1977 Centennial Year
- We are located on the 2nd floor of Gravenhurst Public Library in a climate-controlled, 10 x 16 room with additional closet space
- Barry Brock, Jack Cline, Janet Merkle, Judy Humphries -- Chair [since 2015]

WHAT DO WE DO?

COLLECT OUR HISTORY:

- Receive new collections – sort and accession
- Interview citizens and preserve those interviews digitally
- Gravenhurst history includes the history of former townships of Morrison, Muskoka & Ryde and the former community of West Gravenhurst – all of which are now part of the Town of Gravenhurst

PRESERVE OUR HISTORY:

- store in archival-quality containers, sleeves & wraps
- Digitize and OCR all photographs & documents to database
- Digitize microfilmed newspapers

SHARE OUR HISTORY:

- We have produced four books of local history over our 40 years: *Light of Other Days; Gravenhurst: An Album of Memories and Mysteries; The Gilded Cage; Early Days, Early Ways* in multiple editions & printings; all have sold out except for our most recent → *Early Days* and more books are planned
- We provide the *Speaking of Gravenhurst* series of history talks which are available to view on YouTube through links on the Gravenhurst Public Library website
- We digitize and OCR all photographs & documents to a database accessible on library public access computers
- We digitize microfilmed newspapers and provide immediate access through microfilm reader
- We maintain a database of over **150,000 images** of photographs & documents from our collections on library computers

- We liaise with Town of Gravenhurst through the Library Board, Municipal Heritage Committee & Town staff by providing research and photographs upon request
- Liaise with Gravenhurst organizations – e.g. Gravenhurst Public & High School; clubs; churches; Branch 302, Royal Canadian Legion; Probus; nursing homes by providing research, photographs, and talks as requested
- Liaise with District organizations – e.g. Bracebridge Probus; Huntsville Historical Society by providing talks as requested
- We provide research to clients upon request, free of charge

HOW ARE WE FUNDED?

- As we are an independent organization, we do NOT receive any funding from the Town of Gravenhurst other than our room, rent-free
- We do NOT charge for research, but always appreciate a donation in return for our services

WHAT DOES GRAVENHURST ARCHIVES HOLD?

ALL MATERIAL COLLECTED BY THE ARCHIVES MUST HAVE A RELATIONSHIP TO GRAVENHURST!

MATERIALS ARE FOUND IN COLLECTIONS **ORGANIZED BY DONOR**

THERE ARE PRESENTLY **OVER 1000 COLLECTIONS** IN GRAVENHURST ARCHIVES CONTAINING:

- Thousands of photographs dating from the 1880's through the 21st century
- Municipal documents and records – on a limited basis; e.g. early by-laws from Ryde Twp., Muskoka Twp.; early deeds; early municipal correspondence
- Maps and plans of subdivision including sets of Fire Insurance Maps
- Ledgers from early businesses
- Family histories e.g. the published history of the Schell Family
- Organizational collections; e.g. Muskoka Summer Theatre Collection in its various configurations from the 1920's through the 1990's; the Gravenhurst High School Collection including almost every yearbook [The Tatler]
- Individual's collections ranging in size from material in a file folder to material requiring several shelves and multiple archival 'bankers'-type boxes; e.g. the Cecil Porter Collection of research & photographs contained in 8 bankers' boxes and 17 x 3 & 4-inch binders; the Henry Fry collection of slides and photographs → hundreds & hundreds!
- Gravenhurst Newspapers on microfilm and in print dating from the late 1800's to 2010; [Since 2015, the Gravenhurst Banner is clipped each week and stored in Vertical Files]
- Early publications; e.g. The Sanitarium [sic] Sun; books written about Muskoka history
- Artifacts such as soldiers' medals can also be found here

HOW DOES THE PUBLIC ACCESS THE COLLECTIONS OF GRAVENHURST ARCHIVES? THROUGH A LIBRARY / ARCHIVES PARTNERSHIP!

ACCESS TO PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS IS MADE THROUGH THE ARCHIVES **DATABASE** OR THROUGH A REQUEST FOR RESEARCH TO THE CHAIR OF THE ARCHIVES

- Over **150,000 documents & photographs** have been scanned and OCR'd to a fully searchable database presently available only on Gravenhurst Library computers; the public search this database and print out those items needed using the library printer
- **Restricted Access may be available** through the Chair of Gravenhurst Archives under total supervision; some materials are too fragile to be handled; some materials i.e. those not in archival sleeves require the use of gloves; Archives cannot be “browsed”; the request must be specific to a particular collection that is deemed to be ‘accessible’; **FINDING AIDS** provide lists of collections with pertinent material on a subject
- **Research brings people** working on University theses or others writing books to the Town for short or extended stays; restaurants & B & B's profit by these visits to Gravenhurst Archives
- **Microfilmed newspapers** are available to be viewed on reels held at the library desk on the 2nd floor of the Gravenhurst Public Library
- **Requests for research** often come through Public Library staff to the Chair; the public sees the library as “the-go-to-place” for information of all types
- **Research** is undertaken by two of the Archives Volunteers; this research can take minutes, days or weeks to complete; there is no charge for this research, but donations are encouraged; requests for research come from across Ontario, across Canada and the United States, and even from Europe; requests come from individuals writing books or articles; from people researching family histories; from the Town of Gravenhurst or from town organizations staging events or from businesses tracing their histories; 2018 saw over 60 people request research i.e. more than one per week!
- Gravenhurst Archives partners with Gravenhurst Public Library to deliver a **series of talks** on Gravenhurst history topics in the library program room; talks are free of charge & well attended; Library Staff create posters & book marks to advertise the series; promotion through various media benefits both Archives and Library!

**WE WORK TOGETHER TO COLLECT, PRESERVE & SHARE
THE HISTORY OF GRAVENHURST**