



Oxford County Archives **Community Impact Report**

Prepared by
Megan Lockhart
Liz Dommasch

2023



MANDATE

The Oxford County Archives acquires, preserves, and makes accessible inactive public records created by, for, and about Oxford County. This includes administrative records, legal records, fiscal records, and historical records of Oxford County (1850 to the present) and its predecessor, the District of Brock (1842 to 1849).

MISSION

The Oxford County Archives endeavours to increase public awareness of the rich cultural heritage of Oxford County through the preservation of its archival records, providing public access to these records, and the implementation of a comprehensive outreach program.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- Section 254 (1) of the Municipal Act, 2001 requires the municipality to “retain and preserve the records of the municipality and its local boards in a secure and accessible manner”.
- County Resolution dated 27 October 1999, creating the Oxford County Archives.
- County corporate policies.
- The Canadian Copyright Act.
- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- Canadian Rules for Archival Description, collections management standards, reference practices, and community outreach principles.



MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHIVIST

Liz Dommasch

It's hard to believe it's been twenty years since I began working at the Oxford County Archives. In 2003, we were located in one room of the old St. Anthony's School in Beachville and our holdings consisted of District of Brock and Oxford County records, as well as around 20 fonds (collections). Today, the Archives is located at 82 Light Street, Woodstock and our holdings have grown immensely with over 260 fonds and the expansion of our services to five area municipalities: Blandford-Blenheim, SWOX, Zorra, East-Zorra Tavistock, and the Town of Ingersoll.

Over the past few years, Archives staff have worked tirelessly to modernize our services through social media, outreach initiatives and community partnerships, as well as through the continual digitization of archival materials made accessible on our website and Vita Collections. At the same time, we've continued to process countless donations and transfers while providing exceptional reference services to internal and external patrons alike. As you'll see over the next few pages, this past year was no exception to the quality and level of work we were able to accomplish to ensure that Oxford County's past is not only preserved but celebrated.

As we look forward to 2025 and the County's 175th anniversary, Oxford County Archives staff are committed to continuing to preserve and promote the County's diverse and fascinating archival heritage. In doing so, we have several projects in the works to commemorate the occasion that we are excited to share with council, staff and the public over the next year or so.

I wish to thank County Council and staff as well as our numerous students, volunteers, donors, and community partners that have helped shape the Archives into what it is today. Without their continuous support we would be unable to accomplish all that we do.

ARCHIVIST'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Establish and administer policies and procedures for the County Archives Management program;

Aid Area Municipalities by assisting or facilitating their Archives Management programs through the transfer of archival records to the Archives;

Identify, collect and preserve records of archival value to the County and the community as a whole, and to make such archival records available to County officials and staff, as well as the general public;

Classify, index and catalogue all items deposited in the archives following proper archival standards;

Stimulate public interest in the history of the Oxford County by the dissemination of information through exhibitions, displays, publications the Oxford County website, prevalent County social media platforms, and public programming and outreach activities;

Ensure equity, diversity, and inclusivity in the collection of County, Area Municipalities, and community stakeholders' archival records and promote transparency in the access and use of those records to ensure that the entire history of the County is represented and interpreted appropriately.

2023 Highlights

JANUARY

Norfolk County Museum & Archives staff visited the Oxford County Archives to tour our facilities and network with our staff.

FEBRUARY

For the first time in the Archives' history, we were invited to take part as an exhibitor at Museum London's Black History Month Opening Celebration. Our exhibit highlighted the life stories and history of historically significant Black individuals, communities, and buildings in Oxford County.

Our staff also took part in Tillsonburg's first Black History Month Celebration as an exhibitor. We were honoured to be invited to these events and were grateful for the opportunity to share some of Oxford County's rich Black cultural heritage.

Began the process of having archival municipal records from the Town of Ingersoll transferred to the Archives for permanent storage.



2023 Highlights

MARCH

Released a new [online exhibit](#) on the Archives' webpage. The "Animals in Archives" exhibit highlights the archival records featuring animals in our collections and celebrates the history of animal-human relationship.

MAY

Our archivist Liz Dommasch, and archives technician Megan Lockhart, presented a session at the Archives Association of Ontario's annual conference. The topic of the presentation was: connecting with communities and contributing to community wellbeing through outreach. Megan and Liz discussed three outreach initiatives that have allowed us expand our services to underrepresented and often overlooked members of the local community.



2023 Highlights

JUNE

Our archives technician Megan took on a special research project for the Woodstock Art Gallery. The goal was to locate the final resting place of Woodstock-born and internationally acclaimed artist Florence Carlyle. After a few weeks of research and corresponding with archival and records management professionals in the UK, Megan finally confirmed that Carlyle is buried in a cemetery in Crowborough, England. Read our blog article for [the full story](#).

JULY

We had a soft launch of a new photograph database "[Archived Oxford](#)". The database is searchable and publicly available online. Currently, around 170 historical postcards from our collection have been added to the database.

Archives staff and a volunteer attended the Oxford County Culture & Heritage Conference as an exhibitor and speaker, and to connect with the community.





CARLYLE Florence of the Cottage Sweet Haws Crowborough
Sussex spinster died 2 May 1923 Probate **London** 5 June to
Juliet Hastings spinster. Effects £1385 11s. 1d.

FLORENCE CARLYLE'S GRAVESITE AND PROBATE.



2023 Highlights

SEPTEMBER

The Archives had two articles published in the 2023 edition of the “MAIGazine”, a publication released annually by the Municipal Archives Interest Group of Ontario. One article highlighted the launch of the new “Archived Oxford” database. The second article examined the journey to find Florence Carlyle’s grave site.

OCTOBER

The Tillsonburg Branch of Oxford County Library hosted the Archives’ Archiving at Home workshop. Participants in the workshop learned how to best store their archival records at home and skills for basic conservation including records repair and cleaning.

NOVEMBER

Archives staff members attended the Kitchener Public Library Genealogy Fair as an exhibitor and vendor, promoting both our resources for genealogical research, and our available publications.

2023 Highlights

DECEMBER

A “special thank you” was attributed to Archivist Liz and the Oxford County Archives in historian Irene Crawford-Siano’s recently published book “By the Seat of His Pants: The Captain Tom (Tommy) Williams Story”. Liz assisted the author with her research and provided access to our collections and resources.

The biographical book shines a spotlight on the life of Sweaburg, Ontario’s decorated pilot Captain Tommy Williams. Williams was a World War I ACE Pilot, an inductee in the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest license pilot, and was inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame.

Captain Tom (Tommy) Williams Story

BY THE SEAT
OF HIS PANTS



Irene Crawford-Siano

Exhibitions

FEBRUARY OCAB EXHIBIT

“Black History in Oxford County”

Curated in oollaboration with Oxford County Library.

MAY VIRTUAL EXHIBIT

“Animals in Archives”

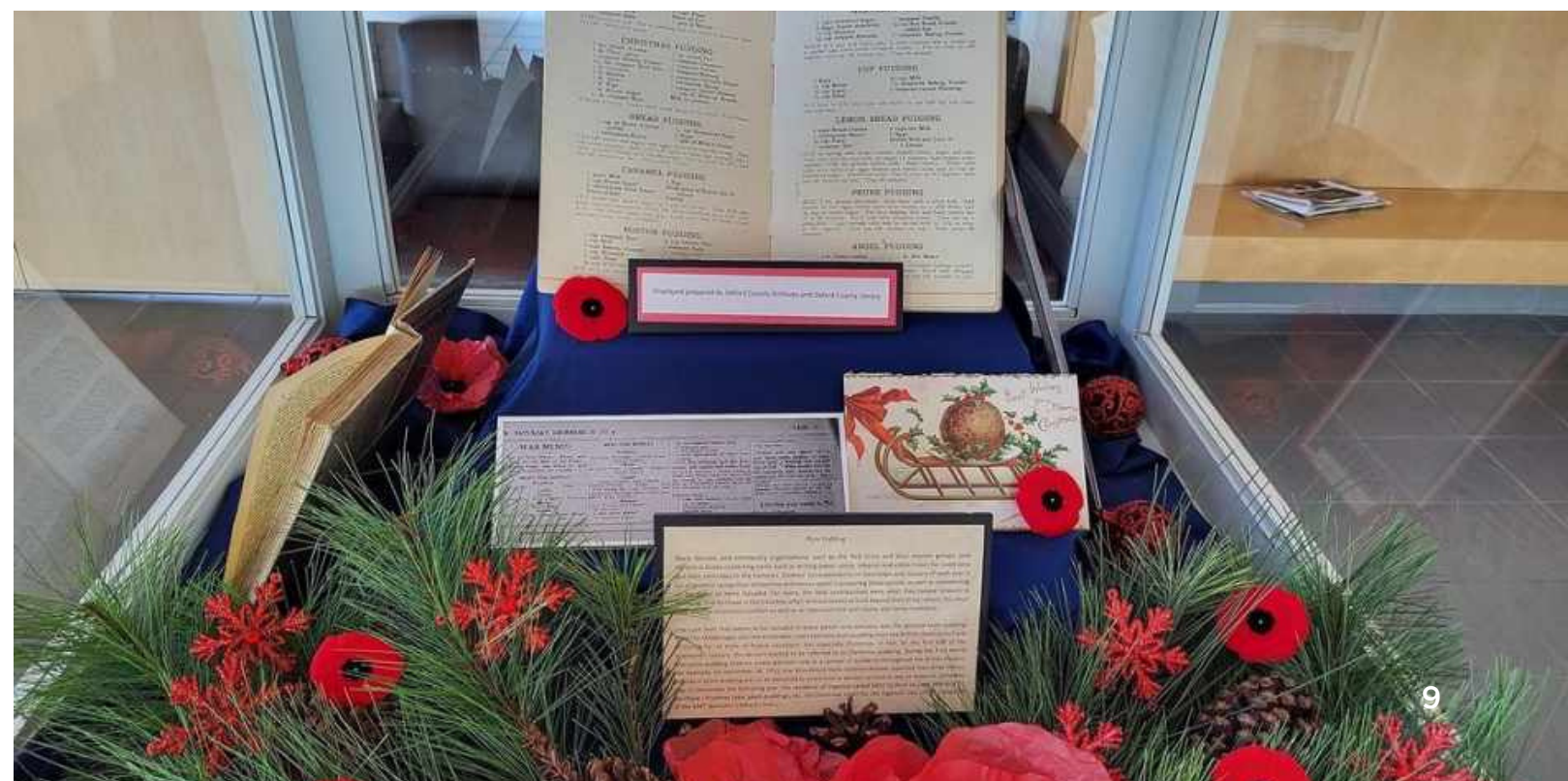
AUGUST OCAB EXHIBIT

“A Trip Through Oxford County”

NOVEMBER OCAB EXHIBIT

“First World War Christmas”

Curated in oollaboration with Oxford County Library.



2023 Statistics

ACQUISITIONS AND TRANSFERS

39 total record and collection donations/transfers from the following notable sources (including but not limited to):

- Beachville District Museum
- Craigowan Golf Club
- Elgin County Museum & Archives
- Norfolk County Archives
- Oxford County Library
- Oxford District Women's Institute
- Princess Elizabeth Women's Institute
- Town of Ingersoll

COLLECTION DATABASES

- 66 fonds and collection descriptions submitted to Archeion.
- 169 historical postcards uploaded to Vita Collections.

REFERENCE INQUIRIES & VISITS

- Internal County and Area Municipality reference: 195 inquiries
- Phone requests: 130
- Email requests: 384
- Social media requests: 20
- In-person research appointments: 124
- Visits to the Archives (tours, students, donations, conservation works, etc.): 358

2023 Statistics

OUTREACH AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Over 35 total outreach initiatives, public programs, and events including:

- Archive tours
- Archiving at Home workshop
- Attendance at Black History Month events
- Conference presentations
- Digitization Day at Beachville District Museum
- Displays and exhibitions
- Educational publications
- Heritage fairs
- Online educational resources
- Speaker Series in partnership with Oxford County Library
- Media interviews: TV, radio, and newspaper
- Memories From the Vault program at Woodingford Lodges
- Providing resources, information, and copies of records for local publications
- Social media campaigns

2023

ARCHIVES TEAM

Staff

- Liz Dommasch, Archivist/Coordinator of Legislative Information
- Megan Lockhart, Legislative Information/Archives Technician

Volunteers and Co-op/Placement Students

- Number of volunteers: 5
- Number of co-op/placement students: 4



THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We are deeply appreciative of the individuals, community groups, and organizations that collaborated with us on events, outreach, and educational programming in 2023. It truly takes a village to preserve and spread awareness of our community's cultural and archival heritage.

- Beachville District Museum
- Duane Kumala-Thomas (Why Not Us)
- EarlyON Oxford
- Heart FM
- Heather Rennalls (author/local Black History historian)
- King's University College (Western University affiliate)
- Kitchener Public Library
- Leroy Hibbert (multicultural outreach program coordinator for LUSO Community Services)
- Museum London
- Olive Williams
- OurDigitalWorld
- Oxford Branch of Ontario Ancestors
- Oxford County Library
- Oxford County Pride
- Oxford Historical Society
- Rogers TV Oxford County
- Stephen Smith (military historian)
- St. Marys Museum & Archives
- Why Not Us
- Woodingford Lodge (Ingersoll, Tillsonburg, and Woodstock)
- Woodstock Art Gallery
- Woodstock Museum National Historic Site
- Woodstock Sentinel-Review

Messages of Thanks & Support

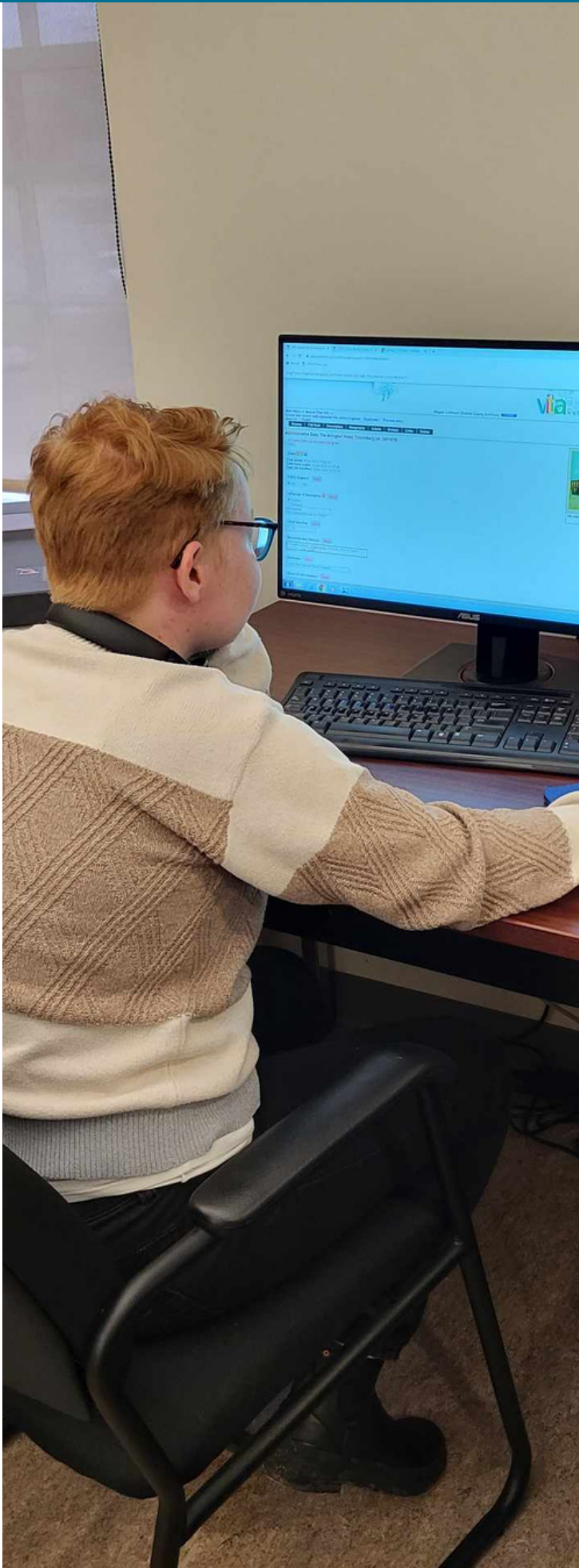
MARY REID
 DIRECTOR/CURATOR
 WOODSTOCK ART GALLERY

“2023 marked a very important year for the Woodstock Art Gallery in honouring nationally recognized artist Florence Carlyle. The Oxford County Archives were invaluable in their assistance in helping us locate her burial place as well as teasing out the nuances of her relationship with Juliet Hastings. This new original research filled in some of crucial gaps of Carlyle’s story and helped increase awareness of one of Woodstock’s most notable citizens.”

STEPHEN J. SMITH
 MILITARY HISTORIAN

“The Oxford County Archives is an often-underestimated resource in our community. It has been my great pleasure to work with the Archives as a patron, community partner, and even a stakeholder at various times over many years. The professional and talented staff have far outperformed other Archives of similar size, and even some of greater size in their passion to preserve and present our collective County history.”



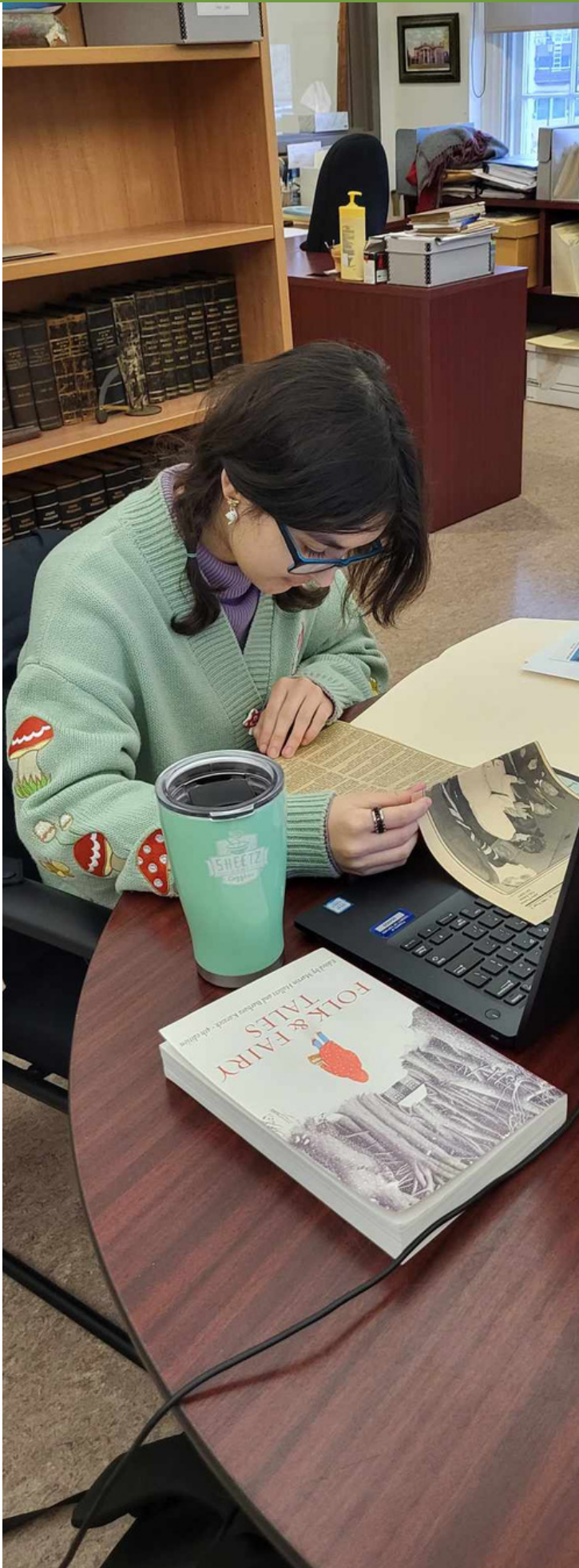


DANIELLE SHENTON
MOHAWK COLLEGE CO-OP STUDENT

“In March of 2023 I had the pleasure of completing a Field Work placement at the Oxford County Archives. From the very first meeting that I had with Liz and Megan to discuss my placement I felt welcome and at ease knowing instantly that this was going to be a really great fit for me both personally and professionally. In the few months that I spent at the Oxford County Archives, I gained an incredible amount of knowledge and experience that you just can't get from a textbook or lecture and can say with certainty that my time there is going to be an asset to me in my future career. We are lucky to have such a wonderful resource in our community.”

DEANNA LEBERT
CO-OP TEACHER
COLLEGE AVENUE SECONDARY SCHOOL

“College Avenue Secondary School has had the pleasure of working with the Oxford County Archives on many occasions, more specifically, in 2023 it was with our Co-operative Education Program. One of our Co-op students recently completed a 5-month placement with the Oxford County Archives. The student thoroughly enjoyed this experience and learned an abundance of information about important local historical figures, their impacts on our County and society as a whole, as well as what life was like during those time periods. Both Liz and Megan, provided an inviting learning/workplace environment with access to numerous archived resources.

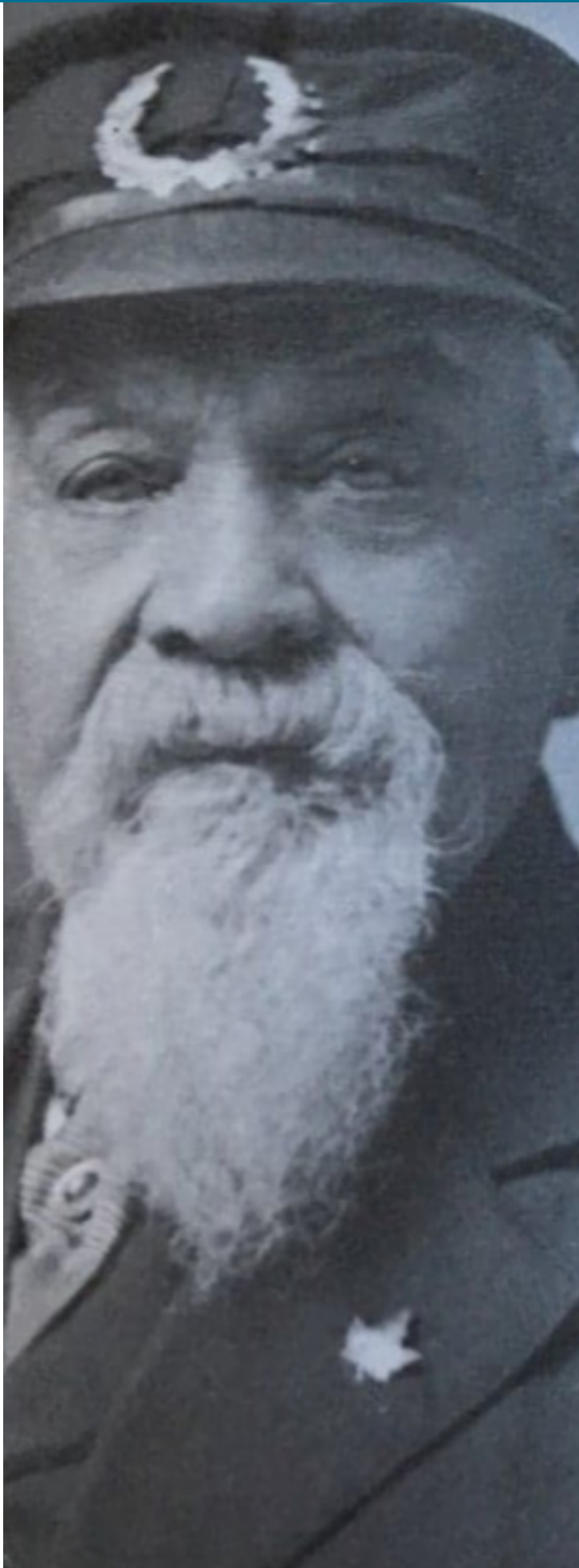


For a student who is new to the area, it really allowed them to explore and learn about Oxford County’s history through direct interactions with archived documents, while developing their research skills and piquing the student’s interests about historical career pathways. The Oxford County Archives and the staff who work there provide an invaluable service preserving our local history that all community members and many secondary school courses can access.”

GAVIN BENNETT
RECORDS & LICENSING COORDINATOR
TOWN OF INGERSOLL

“I have had the pleasure of several professional interactions with the Oxford County Archives and its staff. The Oxford County Archives has provided invaluable assistance to the Town of Ingersoll’s ongoing efforts to rationalize its paper archives and records storage. Archive staff proved essential in identifying, transporting, and transferring Town documents to the County.

Indirectly, County Archive online content has been an excellent resource, providing historical information, data and anecdotes which helps contextualize my own work, digitizing paper town and property records.”



HEATHER RENNALLS

HISTORICAL RESEARCHER, FREELANCE WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHER & BLOGGER

“I had the pleasure of knowing Megan Lockhart and Liz Dommasch from the Oxford County Archives in 2022 when Megan contacted me to archive my website. Since then, both Megan and Liz assisted me in researching Black History in Oxford County. Megan also attended community events when I asked if Oxford County Archives would participate. The first event was the 21st Opening Ceremony for Black History Month hosted by the London Black History Coordinating Committee (LBHCC). The second was the Annual Oxford County Culture and Heritage Conference held in Woodstock, in which Megan did a great job presenting.”

MATTHEW GRIFFIS

DIGITAL LITERACY & LOCAL HISTORY TECHNICIAN, TILLSONBURG BRANCH OCL

“The Oxford County Archives help me a great deal in my role. They answer queries I have about historical sources and help me locate materials helpful to my work. They also support library patrons who need more primary source materials for their historical research projects. The Archives also contribute to library programming: last October, Archives staff conducted a well-attended “Archiving at Home” workshop. The Archives also collaborate with the Library on its Local History Speaker Series. I consider the Archives a valuable partner organization and look forward to working further with them.”



SIDNEY HICKS
CURATOR
BEACHVILLE DISTRICT MUSEUM

“The Beachville District Museum is proud to extend our wholehearted support to the Oxford County Archives, our invaluable community partner. In the past year, we have had many opportunities to work with their team to ensure that historic materials are best preserved for years to come...It is through partnerships like these that we can bridge the gap between the past and the present, fostering a deeper connection with our roots. The Oxford County Archives plays a pivotal role in this endeavor, contributing to the collective knowledge and cultural wealth that defines us as a community.”

ANNE INNES
OXFORD COUNTY DISTRICT WOMEN'S
INSTITUTE

“I and the members of the Oxford District Women's Institute value immensely the work of the staff and the value of the Oxford County Archives. They have supported the work of the Women's Institute in Oxford County in providing a safe place to preserve nearly a hundred years of local history. The opportunity to give [the Tweedsmuir Community History Scrapbooks] to the archives was a blessing for sure to those of us who realize the importance of storing this fragile material. Their understanding of the work put into the “Tweedsmuir Histories” inspired the confidence and the willingness to give the originals to the archives.”



Oxford County Archives

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