

# Merrickville and District Historical Society

## Archival Update, Fall -2015



Here we are, it's that time of year again, when we say farewell to summer and hello to fall. We are so lucky to be able to share the four seasons of the year, like all of them or not! This summer was glorious, with lots of sun, rain, humidity and heat, a gardener's paradise. Alas, this means not a lot of work done in the archives by this said gardener, but we did manage to accomplish a fair number of tasks.

As indicated in the last Update, Nancy Warr has been diligently working on the Society's inventory in the Blockhouse and we are pleased to say that she has completed that portion. The next phase is to check all of the inventory in the Archives. Everything that has been received in the past (including both the Blockhouse and the Archives) had been assigned an Accession Catalogue card, with a description of the item, the donor and any relevant historical information pertaining to that artifact. The information on those cards in the past had been filed in numerical order and stored in folders in filing cabinets in the archives. Unfortunately some of these files have been, shall we say, a little mixed up over the years; but once Nancy started the project, she went full speed and has managed to place everything in the right order and in its proper place. Items received or catalogued post-2005 are now registered in the Archive central computer system. Now that we know just what we have and where it is in the Blockhouse, we can now start on the Archives. For future reference Nancy will be arranging to have the inventory list printed and placed in a binder in the archives along with a copy in the Blockhouse which will assist with any enquiries the volunteers and students may have from the visitors in the Blockhouse.

But wait, she has not finished yet! Along with two other volunteers, Nancy has been compiling a large number of photographs of the artifacts in the Blockhouse; in particular those items that are on the second floor. Over the years we have had a number of visitors that have been unable to manage the stairs for one reason or other, (can't understand why Col. By didn't arrange to install an elevator, or bathrooms for that matter), and have been disappointed not be able to view the many artifacts on display, in particular the domestic items. Once this photo album has been completed it will be placed downstairs on the old Harry McLean desk where people can sit and view the photographed items at their leisure.

Oops, I was in the blockhouse today and the photo album is finished and on display, with not only photographs but lots of interesting captions relating to the pictures.

Wonderful idea Nancy!

Another busy person has been Michael Whittaker, the Society's First Vice President and may I add your Blockhouse Manager (no Official Title as yet) as it would seem he has been overseeing the day to day operations of the Blockhouse and has been re-arranging, with the help of the students, the artifacts that are on display. He has arranged the artifacts in groups that specifically relate to each other, moved items from upstairs to downstairs and vice versa, opened up some of the cabinetry to help display items that were hidden from the public eye, and generally opened up the whole area to make it easier to identify all of the artifacts on display. New signs have been made by the students both in English and French.

All of this is quite wonderful. However some items have now been removed from the Blockhouse and placed in the Archives while others have been removed from the Archives back to the Blockhouse. They now have to be updated in the catalogue system as to their actual location, and a suitable location has to be found to store those items that have been moved back to the archives, where they can be kept safe and are easily accessible. This will mean re-arranging a few things, as believe it or not, we are quickly running out of space.

## PastPerfect Project

On August 28, 2015, the Merrickville and District Historical Society welcomed Angela Beking as the Project Coordinator for the PastPerfect Project. Over the next 26 weeks, Angela will manage the Society's software upgrade from Microsoft Access to PastPerfect 5.0. A \$9,000 grant from the Heritage Merrickville Foundation, received in May 2015, will allow us to replace our aging computers and implement the new software. PastPerfect will greatly improve the accessibility of our collections, as users will eventually be able to search online for information using a variety of search terms including names, places, subjects and keywords.

Angela has been hired through the Ontario Job Creation Partnership, which is administered through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. She has an M.A. in Public History from Carleton University, and is a familiar face at the Blockhouse Museum, where she has volunteered in the spring and fall seasons since 2010.



If you are interested in learning more about this project or would like to put your name on the list to receive training in the new software, please contact Ann Martin by email at [acm.mapletale@gmail.com](mailto:acm.mapletale@gmail.com) or by phone at 613-269-2042. MDHS would like to thank the Heritage Merrickville Foundation and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for this opportunity to improve the community's access to its archives and collections.

## Smith Premier Typewriter

With today's technology, some of our younger members might not be aware of what we old folk used to call a typewriter, or even what it might look like. Well we are proud to say we do have an early 1900's Smith Premier Typewriter in the Archives. This is not your sophisticated little electronic machine with a finger sensitive touch key pad, oh no my dears this was a very heavy (and I mean heavy - I had trouble moving it off the shelf and onto the table) typewriter made of metal and iron. I would imagine that once the typewriter was placed on a table, the secretary (or other user) wouldn't be moving it too far. The following is a brief history of the first Smith Premier:

The Smith-Premier Typewriter Company is named for brothers Lyman, Hurlburt, Monroe and Wilbert Smith. Prior to entering the typewriter industry these men were gun manufacturers. Under their employ as a gun maker was a man by the name of Alexander Timothy Brown. Mr. Brown was an inventive fellow whom the Smiths had enough faith in to give full creative license in the creation of a new typewriter. This typewriter, being the Smith Premier 1, was patented in 1889.

The Smith-Premier No. 1 model (ours is a number 4) features a full (double) keyboard – one upper case and one lowercase – as well as two space bars (ours only has one) It is also a upstroke blindwriter meaning the typist could not see the text while it was being typed. Two of the more interesting mechanical features are a ribbon that zig-zags and a hand cranked brush that cleans the typebars. These typewriters sold well and eventually the Smiths exited the firearms business to concentrate exclusively on writing machine.

In 1893 Smith-Premier joined with typewriter manufacturers Remington, Yost, Densmore and Caligraph to form the Union Typewriter Company Trust. All of these companies had one thing in common, they all produced upstroke blindwriters. Eventually as public demand for visible writers grew, Smith-Premier knew it was time to give the consumer what they wanted. The Smiths wanted to produce a frontstrike visible typewriter that would compete directly with a new-to-the-market Underwood typewriter. This did not go over well with the Union so the brothers disposed of their shares in the company they founded and left the Union. They founded a new company in 1903, the L.C. Smith & Brothers Typewriter Company.

During production there was a Lino-Type machine which was a variant of the No.1 machine. The No. 2-5 models were to the No. 1; differences being a single spacebar replacing the original two-piece design. In 1921 the Remington virtually identical Typewriter Company fully absorbed the Smith Premier brand and almost immediately all new Smith-Premier standard and portable typewriters were simply rebranded Remington. The company L.C. Smith and Brothers Typewriter Company stopped all operation in 1940.

What a typewriter - you can't see what you are doing, there's no correction tape and no spell check, and it's too heavy to pick up and throw out the window in frustration. Certainly not a machine for the faint of heart, but for someone with heavy handed key strokes. I am not sure if you can see from the picture, but the upper keyboard is for capital letters and the bottom for lower case lettering. No shift key to change the letters. Also the number keys are placed on either side of the keyboard. The left side are 2 to 5 and the right side 6 to 9. There is no 1 or 0, I presume they would have used the letter l and o. Does anyone know, or know of a more senior relative that might have had the pleasure of using such a beast?



This typewriter was donated by Mrs. Sherin of Ottawa, and was catalogued by the Historical Society on 29th August 1986.

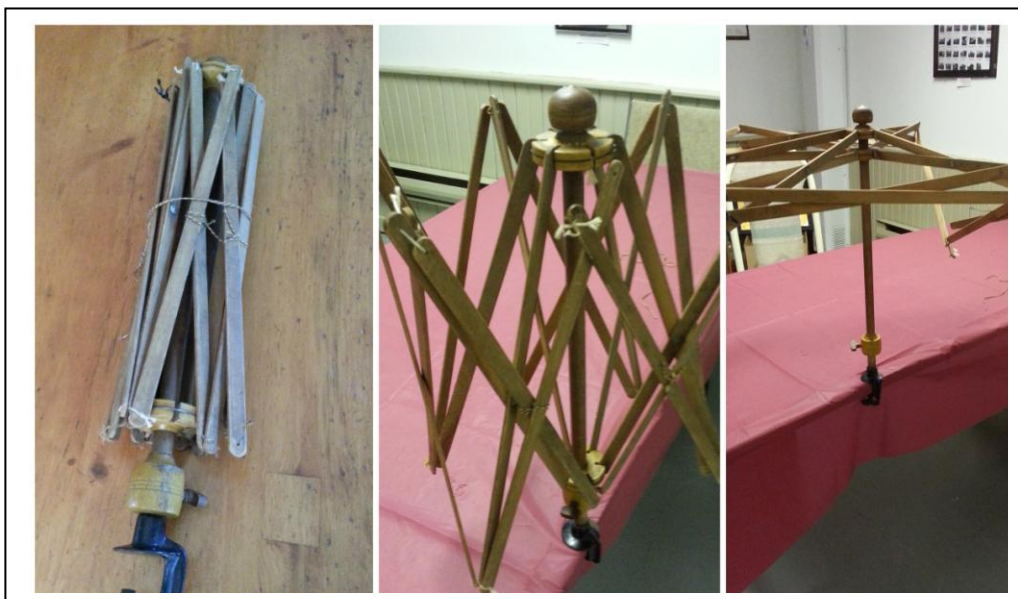


This next item of interest was donated by Mrs. Bryan Stanford of Lakefield Ontario. It was received by the Society on August 4, 1974 and was registered as a Clothes Dryer but was later identified as a Wooden Umbrella Swift. The following is a brief history taken from Wikipedia.

*A swift is a tool used to hold a hank of yarn while it is being wound off. It has an adjustable diameter so that it can hold hanks of many sizes, and rotates around a central rod. They are generally made out of wood or metal, however other materials may also be used. In the 18th and 19th centuries, swifts were sometimes made of whale ivory and they are now sought-after antiques. Swifts are not used very much in the textile industry, but are used more by knitters and crocheters who buy their yarn in hank form. The swift allows for easy balling, without the yarn getting tangled and knotted.*

*A swift can be as simple as four rods fixed into an axis, with bands connecting them. By sliding the bands the effective diameter changes, for different sized hanks. However, most swifts are more complicated than this.*

*The 'umbrella swift' is one of the more common varieties, the advantage of it being that it folds up when not in use. Wooden umbrella swifts are the most common type of swift in use. They are preferred by hand spinners because they fold up, which is good for storage, and they are generally more stable, of higher quality, and look nicer than metal umbrella swifts.*



Unfortunately as you can see in the third picture the Swift is slightly damaged but could be repaired.

Any comments or suggestion you might wish to add to this or any upcoming Update or perhaps you might have some hidden artifact, photographs, letters etc. that you would like to donate, don't be shy, please feel free to contact us.

It is that time of year again when your annual society membership is due. Why not get a head start for 2016.

The annual membership runs from November 1st to October 31st - \$10.00 for single, \$15.00 for family. Life memberships are \$100.00 for a single and \$150.00 for a family. This can easily be taken care of when either visiting the Archives or attending the monthly lecture meeting when our Membership Committee Member Art Hackett will be only too happy to take care of you. Or just send a cheque to the Merrickville and District Historical Society, P.O. Box 394, Merrickville, Ontario. K0G 1N0 and your membership card will be mailed to you.