

Using history to fund historical site



To date, this is the oldest picture of Bancroft's Hastings Street recorded by the Bancroft North Hastings Heritage Museum. It was taken around 1875. / SUBMITTED

By Sarah Sobanski

The Bancroft North Hastings Heritage Museum is hosting a visually interactive trip down memory lane.

Show *Bancroft Now and Then* will give community members access to over 170 historic photos of the Town of Bancroft. The show will help raise money for a new software archiving system for the museum's photo collection.

‘We’re talking about a computer, scanner, and likely photography equipment that would allow us to digitalize in a more efficient way,’ said show host and councillor for the museum board Mary Kavanagh. ‘The software I would like to see us have is costly. It’s a software that many museums across Canada use. It [would] allow us to have reciprocity with other museums. If we have something on file they can borrow from us, [then] we can borrow from them [too].’

The idea for the picture show was first sparked at the Hastings County Historical Society's presentation of *Sir John Eh!*. Actors Brian and Renee Porter came to the Bancroft Village Playhouse to portray Sir John A. Macdonald and his wife for community members as an immersive history experience. During intermission, Kavanagh presented photos from Bancroft's history. The response from audience members was very positive. There was so much discussion that Kavanagh couldn't even make it through half of her presentation.

‘So from that the idea was born [that] we could create a series that we’ll look at over the course of the year.’

‘Tentatively, we have it booked for every month. The third Wednesday of every month,’ explained Kavanagh. ‘One of the other ideas was to pull in as much of the [area's] surrounding history as we can. We [might] approach someone in Maynooth, and then have all the pictures from Maynooth. That someone [could] do all the commentating on the pictures from Maynooth. I would like to do it with some of the other surrounding areas around Bancroft [as well].’

She added, ‘Dungannon has a very rich history. It was an entity unto itself for a century and then it was amalgamated with the Town of Bancroft. The Town of Bancroft was originally part of Faraday and then it became Bancroft, separate from Faraday. So there's a huge history there. There's a huge history in the Paudash and Cardiff area as well. So as we progress, as time permits, I'm hoping to have people come forward who would be interested.’

Attendees will have access to a wealth of information at the show. It will feature photographs from as far back as the 1800s.

All ages are welcome. The show is designed for long-time Bancroft residents and those who have recently come to the area.

‘I would show a picture of Price Ford as it is today to orient the audience. Then I’ll start moving back in time from in that location with what has existed over time. We can go back with the pictures we have on file, and with my own personal collection of pictures, back into the 1800s with almost all of the town,’ said Kavanagh.

Kavanagh has donated many of her family's photo collection to the project. She suspects her experience with cataloging photos can help others timeline their own old photographs of the town.

‘My mother had a mind like a steel trap. She told me stories from the time I was little [and] I was keenly interested. [She] sat with me, and all [of our] pictures. She wrote the names on the back [and] she told me stor[ies] about them. So I have a real keen sense of

time when these pictures were taken,? told Kavanagh. ?Frequently, you'll have a picture where it's a downtown picture of some description, but no one will really know when it was taken. There are factors [to identify them] and that was part of my teachings. See that house in the background [of a photo], it wasn't built until 1905, so this picture has to have been taken after 1905. But if there's another picture and there's a blank space there, it has to have been taken before 1905. I want people to [know] of the pictures that they have, [and] on their own how to date them.?

Kavanagh has big dreams for the museum. She said she hopes that by archiving and digitalizing photographs now, the museum can preserve them in case of a fire or flood. She wants the photographs to be around in 200 years, just as she said she wants the museum to be.

The museum is also accepting donations and welcomes historical photographs from community members. Kavanagh said that she can make copies of the original photographs so that the owner doesn't have to part with their original copies.

Tickets for the first show of *Bancroft Now and Then* are \$10. Tickets are available at Harvest Moon, the municipal office and at the door.