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Winter 2021

# IT'S ABOUT TIME...

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT HOPE ARCHIVES

### OPEN BY APPOINTMENT

The Port Hope Archives is open by appointment. We're excited to see you! See page 4 for more details about booking an appointment, and our Covid protocols.

And, don't forget to donate materials to our **Covid19 Community Memory Project**. See page 6 for more details, or visit <https://www.porthopearchives.com/covid-19-community-memory-project.html>

### EDUCATION SINCE 1797 (PART 2)

*This is a continuation of the Education article started in the Fall 2020 newsletter. If you haven't read it yet, we would recommend you start with it first before continuing...*

We left off this story of education in Port Hope leading up to the early 1870s. A major change to our education system happened in 1871– the Act to Improve the Common and Grammar Schools of the Province of Ontario made schooling free and compulsory up to the age of 14. This meant that school districts needed to be able to accommodate all school-aged residents at the local schools. Another change that happened at this time was to begin calling grammar schools 'high schools' and to call common schools 'public schools'.

The move to make public schools free meant that there was a much greater need to accommodate the local school-aged children. As mentioned in the last article, only 51% of school-aged children were attending school in Port Hope in 1850, just 20 years earlier, so Port Hope's school system by 1871 had been developed to accommodate only a portion of the local children. *(continued on next page...)*

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#### HOURS

The Archives is open by appointment. Please contact the Archives by phone or email to book an appointment.

#### MANDATE:

THE PORT HOPE ARCHIVES EXISTS TO COLLECT AND PRESERVE ARCHIVAL MATERIALS WHICH ILLUSTRATE THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE OR WHICH PERTAIN IN WHOLE OR IN PART TO ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE.

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Rachel Arnaud

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**COMMUNITY HISTORY  
HAPPENS HERE!**

In 1868, the East Primary School was built at Elgin and McCaul Streets to replace the East Octagon School. The West Octagon School remained in use until around 1873, but locals apparently did not think too highly of this 'modern' octagonal structure. An article in the April 14, 1871 edition of 'The Guide' used words and phrases such as 'shaped like a mushroom', 'gloomy', and dark and dirty. Apparently it was nick-named the 'Fort' due to its lack of windows and strange shape. The article also calls the current teacher 'sensible' for resigning, and mentions the need for a new schoolhouse. The criticisms must have been shared in the town because a new school, West Primary, was finally built in 1873 at the north-west corner of Bruton and Bramley Streets to replace the octagon, and was able to accommodate a greater number of school-aged children. The building served many other purposes in its life, including a dance school and nursery school. It was in use until 1997.

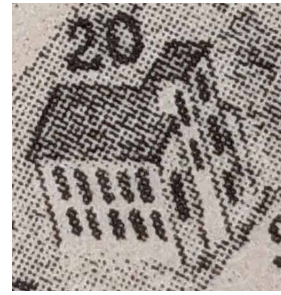
***West Primary School Room 2 , 1924 (Acc.#2014.85.1.5417)***



A local school report, written by Rev. John Cassie in 1860, mentions that the west octagon school "laboured under difficulties". It is also eye-opening to some of the social conditions that the local schools dealt with in that time— he writes that "the non-attendance of so many [local] children (about 300) is to be traced, in some cases, to indifference in parents, in others to extreme poverty, the parents not being able to give their child a decent outfit."

Despite schooling being made free and compulsory in 1871, only 64% of Port Hope's children, aged 5-16, were attending school by 1872, with the youngest children making up the highest percentage of students. These young students were mainly learning spelling, writing, and arithmetic. We can only guess at the reasons that children were still not attending school, but the societal problems that come along with poverty and indifference would have persisted despite the 1871 Act. Also, many childhood illnesses that we are now routinely immunized against would have spread through the schools, causing long absences in some cases.

The East Primary School, located at the north-west corner of Elgin and McCaul Streets, was used as a primary school until 1923, when it was decided that it made better sense to build a new school rather than to repair the current school. The new school was built at nearby Ward and Hope Streets at the cost of approximately \$27,000 by local contractor Thomas Garnett & Sons, and was completed in 1925. The new school had just four classrooms but an addition was built in 1949 that added 8 new



*From left to right: West Primary School, West Octagon (before being torn down), Union School, High School, and East Primary School. From the 'Bird's Eye View of Port Hope' map, 1874.*

rooms, due to a significant increase in students attending the school post-WWII. A 100' foot long army hut was purchased from Niagara-on-the-Lake and transported to Port Hope in 1947 to be used for an additional three classrooms at the school before the addition was built. In 1930 this school was officially named 'Dr. L.B. Powers Public School' to recognize the 35 years that local physician Dr. Lafontaine Baldwin Powers had served as Public School trustee. In 1925 Dr. Powers had been initially opposed to naming the new school after him, as he disagreed with the cost to taxpayers of building the school, so the new school remained without a name until it was finally settled in 1930. Dr. L. B. Powers school remained open until 2006, at which point its students were moved to Beatrice Strong Public School on Rose Glen Road due to simply outgrowing the building. The Dr. L.B. Powers school building still exists today at 64 Ward Street, and was converted to residential units in 2009.



***Dr. L.B. Powers School Students with Canadian Red Ensign, Late 1930s (Acc.#2016.31.2.6421)***

The United Grammar and Common School, located on the upper floors of Knowlson's Block (corner of Walton and Cavan Street) in 1856, was unable to continue accommodating its tightly-packed students and only 5 years later moved to Mill Street, in 1861. The Union School is said to have reopened in what we now refer to as the Crawford Block (37-41 Mill Street). Within a few years, the Board of Trustees decided it was time to build a dedicated Union School, and after over \$10,000 was raised the Union School was built and opened on Pine Street in 1867.

With the change in 1871 to free and compulsory education, the new Union School quickly became too small to hold both public and high school classes. The board of trustees, under the leadership



of the high school's principal Dr. Adam Purslow, purchased what was known as the 'Old Kirk' at North and Brown Street and opened a new high school in 1872. The building wasn't 'old' at all, having only been built for the local Presbyterian congregation in 1860; when they merged with the Mill Street Presbyterian Church in 1872, the church was sold to the school board.

As the town grew, and more students began to attend classes, the High school once again became too large for its current accommodations. It was decided in 1896 that a new building would be purpose built for a High School on nearby Pine Street for approximately \$12,000. The new High School was officially opened on January 11, 1897 with a special reception at the Opera House at Walton and John Streets. This building was used as a High School until the 1950s, when the current High School was built on Highland Drive. This building on Pine Street was then used as a public school named Dr. M.S. Hawkins, named after Doctor Morgan Stanley Hawkins of Port Hope, a former school teacher, dentist, and Chairman of the Board of Public School Trustees. The school was open until the early 2000s, at which point the building was no longer needed and converted to condos. Dr. Hawkins Senior Public School is now located on the same property as the High School, at 130 Highland Drive.



***Port Hope High School, Form IV, 1912 (Acc.#999.6.1.516)***

After the move of the High School to their own building, a Model School for the County of Durham (a teacher training school) was opened in the Union School building in 1877. The Union School added a new wing in 1883, which made room for 11 classrooms. The Model School would run at this site until the Union School building was torn down to be replaced by Central Public School. It isn't clear why the only 45-year-old Union School needed to be replaced, however the new Central School was built to hold 15 generously-sized classrooms with modern amenities, so perhaps space was the issue, or the older building was too costly to update to new standards. The new Central School, designed by architects Ellis & Connery, was built behind the Union School. It would serve as a public school in Port Hope until 2009, when its students were moved to Ganaraska Trail Public School. At this time, this beautiful school building (located at 39 Pine Street N.) has been heritage designated and retains its original features as built in 1912, with the exception of the gym that was an addition in 1867.

Another school that served our community was Howard Jordan Public School, which was founded in 1958 and opened in 1960 on Percival Street. This L-shaped building had 10 classrooms, and before its closure in 2009 had just over 200 students. The school was named in honour of W. Howard Jordan,



***Port Hope Model School, c1896 (Acc.#995.1.1.91)***

Supervisory Principal of the Port Hope Public Schools from 1934-1969. Jordan laid the cornerstone of the school when it was built. Shortly after its 50th anniversary, the school closed and the students merged with the Ganaraska Trail Public School in 2009.

St. Anthony's Catholic Elementary School, on Toronto Road, has also been a part of our community since it opened in 1960. Monsignor Leo Cleary and the Sisters of Saint Joseph opened St. Mary's Elementary School in 1956 and then St. Anthony's in 1960 for the older students. An addition, including 8 classrooms and a gym, was added to St. Anthony's in 1996. In 2009 St. Mary's School closed and a new wing was added to St. Anthony's. The school now holds over 350 students from Junior Kindergarten to grade 8.

Trinity College School has also been an important fixture in our community since 1868, when its early days of schooling consisted of a staff of nine teachers and only 70 students. On ten acres of land purchased in 1871, the new school was built and attendance and prominence rapidly increased over the next decades. The school suffered through major fires throughout its history, and after the last major fire in 1928 was built into the school we recognize as TCS today. If you're interested in the history of TCS, I encourage you to go and read the extensive history published on the school, called 'The School on the Hill', and visit their online Archives: <https://www.tcs.on.ca/who-we-are/john-d-burns-archives>.

The road to education in Port Hope hasn't always been straightforward, but I hope this article has helped to show how our local schools and education evolved alongside the town as it grew, and as our priorities as a community and nation changed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

**If you have any stories, memories, photographs, etc. of any of the schools please consider donating a copy to the Archives to help us preserve our local history of education.**

*The history of our local education doesn't stop here! The spring 2021 newsletter will feature an article on the history of the rural schools in Hope Township. The rural schools presented their own set of challenges unique to rural students and families, so we will investigate their history separately. Stay tuned!*

## A Tribute to George Sweanor

As you may have heard, Port Hope veteran George Sweanor passed away at the age of 101 this past January. He lived a remarkable life, to say the least.

George Sweanor joined the RCAF in WWII and was trained as a gunner, navigator and observer. After a failed bombing raid over Berlin in 1943, he was wounded and stranded and became a prisoner of war in the Stalag Luft III camp outside Germany. Here he helped with the real 'Great Escape' (made famous by the 1963 Steve McQueen movie) by being a lookout while other prisoners dug the underground escape tunnels, and moving the tunnels' sand in his socks so that they wouldn't be discovered. He remained in the camp until 1945 when Germany was liberated, and was soon reunited with his wife and young daughter. He would continue to serve in the RCAF as navigator and instructor, and worked throughout Canada at different postings. Later in life he became a high school history and geography teacher.

George spent years compiling Port Hope's military history, 'The Military Contributions of a Small Town' which has been published through the Archives. It includes information about all veterans from Port Hope from the American Revolution to modern conflicts. It's now in its 10th year of publication, and is an incredibly valuable resource to researchers and family members of our local veterans.

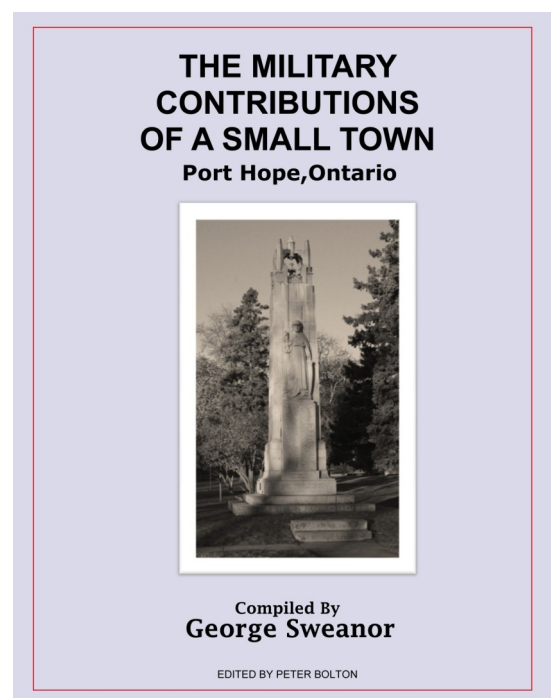
The Globe and Mail recently wrote a wonderful and detailed tribute to George Sweanor, and I encourage you all to go and read it today. This short tribute doesn't do his life story quite the justice it deserves. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canadian-prisoner-of-war-george-sweanor-aided-the-great-escape/>

Thank you, George, for all that you have contributed to our nation, as well as our community. We won't forget.



Left: George Sweanor in RCAF uniform (*photo from the Globe article*)

Right: 'Military Contributions of a Small Town' book by George Sweanor



## CHAIR'S REPORT

With spring around the corner, it's time to start planning for the upcoming year's events. Hopefully the Covid crisis will be over allowing us to plan great things. We are now once again open by appointment only, so you can phone Rachel and set up a time for your research. We had a very successful AGM in February, via Zoom, which was greatly attended. Hopefully next year we will be able to have it in person once again. Our 2020 CSJ grant student has now left us, and we have submitted our application for a 2021 student. Also starting March 15th, we will have a Fleming College student with us for four months performing her internship. We are quite excited for this to happen. I hope you enjoy this copy of our Winter newsletter, and that it finds you both healthy and safe, and that we will see you soon at the Archives.

***Rick***

## ARCHIVIST'S MESSAGE

We are once again open by appointment, since the latest lockdown has ended. Research requests have been coming in quite steadily as of late, so I've been kept busy doing some very interesting research on topics on property and family history. We hope you enjoyed the 'Ask Your Local Archivist' event in celebration of Ontario Heritage Week in February— I was available all day to answer any questions you had on the Archives and research. We are also accepting archival donations to the collection, so if you have been putting aside items to donate to the Archives please contact us to set up a date to drop them off. Rowan Palleske, our CSJ grant employee, has come and gone since the last newsletter. She did a fantastic job starting the project of digitizing our large land instrument and probate collection. Thanks for all your hard work, Rowan! We're also looking forward to an intern from Fleming College's Cultural Heritage Management program starting at the Archives this month. She'll be with the Archives for a total of 15 weeks. Welcome Kate!

***Rachel***

The Port Hope Archives has reopened for in-person research visits. Here's what we're doing to ensure your visit is as safe as possible:

- All visitors must book an appointment time to visit for any purpose, at least 2 business days in advance (please prepare an alternate date you can visit in case your preferred day/time is not available)
- Only 1 visitor allowed in the building per appointment
- All visits are limited to a 90-minute designated time slot to allow time for cleaning between visits
- Staff will conduct a collection search for you in advance of your appointment and bring out all the materials they find on your topic
- Every visitor will fill out a mandatory Covid screening questionnaire on entering the building
- All materials handled by researchers will be quarantined before they are returned to circulation
- Thorough cleaning of our reading room surfaces before/after each visitor
- Face masks are mandatory and to be worn properly at all times
- NEW: payment by debit or credit card to be accepted starting December
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***If you're not able to visit us in-person, we are happy to do research on your behalf.***



## **Port Hope Archives' Canada Summer Jobs Employee**

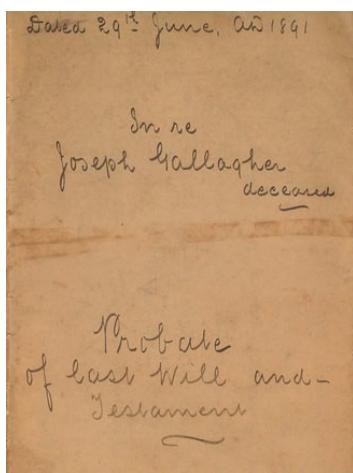
*The Port Hope Archives received funding through the Canada Summer Jobs program for 2020, but due to Covid the grant employee worked at the Archives in early 2021 rather than summer 2020.*



Hello everyone, my name is Rowan Palleske and I was the Port Hope Archives' 2020 CSJ employee. I am a recent graduate from Centennial College's Museum and Cultural Heritage postgraduate certificate program in which I led a digitization project for the Centennial College Archives as well as interned at the AGO in their Collections Information department. The pandemic shifted many things in the lives of Canadians, and I am no exception to this as I had returned home last March from Toronto just prior to the full quarantine. I searched for ways to give back to my community as well as apply

the new skill set I had acquired during my time in Toronto and stumbled across the opportunity to work with the Port Hope Archives. Port Hope has held a special place in my heart for many years, as I spent a majority of my time as a youth playing and refereeing soccer, as well as taking swimming lessons then teaching them and lifeguarding at Jack Burger Sports Complex. I am immensely grateful to have been able to apply my knowledge as well as expand on my skills during my time at the Port Hope Archives, and learn more about the quaint and historically rich town of Port Hope in the process.

### **'As I Will It' Virtual Exhibit**



Part of the work that I conducted during my contract period was to start the digitization of the ~1000 probates housed in the Port Hope Archives' collection. Probates are legal documents pertaining to the enactment of a deceased person's will and my role was ensuring successful information transfer from the probates into the archival database to enable their accessibility. During this time, I discovered numerous interesting stories about the people who had lived in Port Hope from as early as the 1800s. Although all probates deal with death, I found that they also offered us a unique window into some truly beautiful aspects of humanity. They denote special relationships between family members, provide insight into what was important to them, and demonstrate the persistence of love beyond death. To showcase some of these meaningful end-of-life stories, I created

an exhibit entitled "As I Will It," which highlights a handful of them as well as the research I conducted on these individuals' lives prior to their death. I am pleased to announce that the exhibit is now open to the public and can be accessed by the link below.

<http://www.porthopearchives.com/as-i-will-it-exhibit.html>



## PORT HOPE ARCHIVES'

### COVID-19 COMMUNITY MEMORY PROJECT

<http://www.porthopearchives.com/covid-19-community-memory-project.html>

We will be creating a special collection to collect and preserve the Covid-19 experiences of those in the Port Hope area. Our aim is to collect records of your experiences of how the pandemic has impacted you, your family, friends, business, and your community.

Types Of Submissions Can Include (but are not limited to):

- Photographs
- Artwork
- Diaries, journals, scrapbooks
- Correspondence
- Business Materials
- Oral histories
- Unpublished works of fiction and non-fiction, i.e. poetry, essays, short stories
- Audio or video recordings
- Journal entries

If you are interested in submitting materials to the Port Hope Archives' **Covid-19 Community Memory Project**, please send a detailed email to [archives@porthope.ca](mailto:archives@porthope.ca) and include as much information as you can. You will be asked to complete an agreement to transfer ownership and assign copyright of the item(s) to the Archives so that we can use them for a variety of important purposes, including research, education, exhibitions, and more.

**Thank you for helping us to collect and preserve our local history!**



## FROM THE COLLECTION



**Riding in Horse-Drawn Carriages, c1900**

### Upcoming Events

**Archives Awareness Week, April**

The Archives is now open by appointment. Please contact us at least 2 business days in advance to book your appointment.

Website: [www.porthopearchives.com](http://www.porthopearchives.com)

Flickr: [www.flickr.com/porthopearchives](http://www.flickr.com/porthopearchives)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PHArchives](http://www.facebook.com/PHArchives)

Archeion: [www.archeion.ca/port-hope-archives](http://www.archeion.ca/port-hope-archives)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PHArchives>

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/porthopearchives/](http://www.instagram.com/porthopearchives/)

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The Port Hope Archives gratefully acknowledges the financial support from The Municipality of Port Hope, Grants Ontario for Heritage Organizations and the Canada Summer Jobs Program