



Burk's Falls & District Historical Society

Newsletter



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Summer 2026

Summer Events Recap

Dinosaur Dig, July 11

Our first event of the summer was our Dinosaur Dig, offering activities based on all things prehistoric. Over 50 attendees came from our community to build their own dinosaurs, excavate fossils, complete a dinosaur scavenger hunt around the Watt Century Farm House, and more! Dinosaur-loving kids and their parents, grandparents, and/or guardians not only enjoyed the activities themselves, but also looking at all of the amazing artifacts in the Watt Century Farm House.



Christmas in July Cookie Decorating, July 25

To celebrate Christmas in July, the Historical Society offered a themed cookie decorating afternoon at the Watt Century Farm House.

Attendees decorated cookies in fun Christmas shapes and explored the Farm House, which had been decorated for the holidays! Although more icing made it into mouths rather than onto the cookies, our attendees had a fun time decorating and celebrating Christmas in July!



Psychic Days, August 8 & 19

In August, the Historical Society brought back one of our most popular fundraising events: Psychic Days! With readings provided by local medium Penny Brandt, we hosted four sessions for participants to learn more about themselves through the psychic arts. We are proud to say that all of the sessions were at full capacity, with a total of 39 participants!



We raised almost \$800 at the Psychic Days events this summer for the Historical Society's initiatives. Thank you to every participant who joined us for these sessions, and to medium Penny Brandt for donating her valuable time!

Heritage Cookbook Project⁴



In June, the Historical Society launched a new project in our community: the Heritage Cookbook!

For over a century, residents of Burk's Falls, Armour, Ryerson, and the surrounding area have been cooking up delicious meals for their families. The recipes that fed some of the first residents of our region have lasting legacies, passed down through generations to shape the ways we cook for our loved ones today.

This is why the Burk's Falls and District Historical Society has begun working to preserve important culinary and family histories through the creation of a community cookbook. We are inviting our community to share their favourite family recipes from years past, alongside a short story or memory about why it matters to you. Selected entries will be included in our printed cookbook, with proceeds supporting our ongoing work to preserve local history.

We are **currently accepting submissions** for the Heritage Cookbook! If you are interested in sharing a family recipe and memory, please email us at:
bffhistorycookbook@gmail.com

The History of Ontario Street

Ontario Street, or the main street running through the business centre of Burk's Falls, has been home to countless businesses since the street was first functioning in the 1890s. Although it is likely impossible to know of every single business that has operated on Ontario Street over the past 130+ years, we are working to piece together a clearer picture of what Burk's Falls' main street looked like throughout the decades.



1908

1950s

1980s

193 Ontario Street, for example, has a rich history as an important business space in Burk's Falls. In 1898, Dr. A.W. Partridge purchased the building from a Dr. Crawford, and began operating it as his practice and a pharmacy. In 1947, his daughter Beatrice and son-in-law Stanley McVey purchased the pharmacy from him, and the pair re-opened it as McVey's Drug Store. At this time, a young woman named Audrey Bishop worked as an apprentice to the McVeys, and worked for them for 15 years following her graduation from pharmacy school in 1954. Bishop purchased the pharmacy herself in 1969, re-naming it Bishop's Pharmacy. She expanded the space into the former RBC location which had formerly operated in the left side of the building, doubling the size of the pharmacy, and operated it personally for almost 42 years until her retirement in 2011. Bishop's Pharmacy closed upon Bishop's retirement, but 193 Ontario Street is fondly remembered by many as the local pharmacy.

If you have any information or knowledge about businesses operating on Ontario Street throughout the years, please reach out to us via email at:

info@burksfallsdistricthistoricalsociety.com

Watt Century Farm House



Take a step back in time at the Watt Century Farm House! Built in 1902, the farm house was home to generations of the Watt family. Filled with local heritage stories and artifacts dating back to the 19th and 20th centuries, the Watt Century Farmhouse is rich with history for anyone to enjoy.

Check out some of our artifacts!



A functioning Singer sewing machine used by Pearl Watt in the 1940s.



A large collection of WWI and WWII era buttons and pins.



A horse-drawn hearse first used by Joseph Hilliar, who started the first funeral home in Burk's Falls in 1905.

Wiseman's Corner Schoolhouse

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Built in 1893, Wiseman's Corner Schoolhouse was used for the education of children from Ryerson Township for nearly 67 years. This one-room schoolhouse represents the true setting of a 19th century classroom, offering a glimpse into the daily lives of those who came before us.



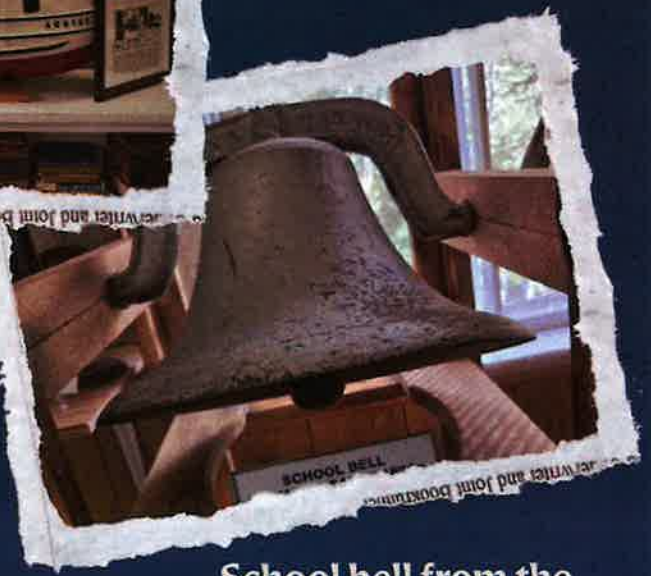
Visit us to see artifacts like these:



A model of the S.S. Armour, which operated on the Magnetawan River.



Clay marbles dating back to 1904, locally played with in Kearney.



School bell from the early 1800s, used at Doe Lake Public School.

Did You Know?

By The Flip of a Coin

The Village of Burk's Falls got its name from a coin toss. In 1875, David Francis Burk beached his canoe at the foot of the Falls of the Magnetawan River, deciding to build a home in what would become our village. Henry and Walter Knight, who established the Knight Brothers Factory, arrived very shortly after and also decided to settle on this land. To decide whose name would act as the foundation of the settlement's title, D.F. Burk and the Knight brothers flipped a coin, with Burk ultimately winning the toss. It was decided that the village would be called Burk's Falls--but it very nearly became Knight's Falls in that small but monumental moment.



**An illustration of
D.F. Burk, 1891**



Pauline Johnson

A Poet's Visit

In 1893, the famed Kanyen'kehà:ka (Mohawk) poet Pauline Johnson visited Burk's Falls, performing her works at the Presbyterian Church at 107 Yonge Street.

The child of a Kanien'kehà chief and an English mother, Johnson often used the stage name "Tekahionwake," meaning 'double-life.' She was a key figure in the construction of Canadian literature at the turn of the century, drawing from her multicultural heritage to critique colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism in Canada at a time when this discourse was rarely platformed. When she performed in Burk's Falls, over two hundred people gathered to hear her speak.



SCENE OF ACTIVITY — Shown here is the heavy equipment removing earth from the rock to be blasted in widening the Highway 520 in Burks Falls. Blasting operations have already started (Photo by Gough)

March 1964, Burk's Falls Arrow

Blast From the Past

Check out these snippets from older issues of our local newspapers!

BLUEBIRD THEATRE

BURKS FALLS

THURS. - FRI. - SAT
JAN. 23 - 24 - 25

Bye Bye Birdie

with
JANET LEIGH
ANN MARGRET
Ed. Sullivan as himself

SUNDAY MOVIE

at 2 p.m. Jan. 26

Also
"BYE BYE BIRDIE"

MON. - TUES. - WED
27 - 28 - 29

"MARILYN"

The story of Marilyn Munroe and narrated by Rock Hudson with bit parts from all her great movies.

ALL STAR CAST
TECHNICOLOR

Two Shows Nightly
7:00 and 9:00 P.M.

January 1964, Burk's Falls Arrow

'RIDE DOWN NORTH'...on the

POLAR BEAR EXPRESS

COCHRANE to MOOSONEE

DAILY except FRIDAY

JUNE 16 to SEPT. 3 INC.

Ontario Northland

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

June 1974, Almaguin News

During an evening of strenuous dancing and singing, teens welcome refreshing drinks such as Honey Coffee Floats. Glasses filled with iced coffee and scoops of vanilla ice cream are topped with fluffy mounds of honey whipped topping made with Coffee-mate, the dry instant non-dairy coffee creamer. A versatile product that stays fresh without refrigeration, Coffee-mate dissolves instantly and completely in all hot beverages. It is convenient to use and never cakes or lumps in the jar.

HONEY COFFEE FLOATS

(SERVES 6 SERVINGS)

3/4 cup honey	1/3 cup cold milk
4 cups hot strong coffee	2 tablespoons honey
1/2 cup dry instant non-dairy coffee creamer	Vanilla ice cream (about 1-1/2 pints)

Dissolve 3/4 cup honey in hot coffee; chill.

Chill bowl and beaters in refrigerator for 15 minutes. Blend non-dairy coffee creamer, milk and 2 tablespoons honey in chilled bowl; whip at high speed with electric mixer until soft peaks form (about 5 minutes).

April 1966, Burk's Falls Arrow

How to Become a Member



Help preserve our area's local history by becoming a member of the Burk's Falls & District Historical Society. Your membership supports our initiatives, events, and the preservation of artifacts in our collection.

**Annual Individual
Membership
\$10.00**

**Annual Family
Membership
\$20.00**

Contact Us:

(705) 571-3308

info@burksfallsdistricthistoricalsociety.com

Check our our website:

www.burksfallsdistricthistoricalsociety.com