

# THE BURLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MINI GAZETTE

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Following our January AGM, our newly elected Officers for 2023 are:

President	Jane Ann Newson
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Don Thorpe
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Nicola Thomson
Secretary	Patricia Taylor
Treasurer	<i>not yet filled</i>
Past President	Joan Downey



PICTURED HERE L-R : 1<sup>st</sup> VP Don Thorpe, Secretary Patricia Taylor, President Jane Ann Newson  
**Missing:** 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Nicola Thomson, Past President Joan Downey.

## **MINI GAZETTE** MARCH CONTENTS

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## FUTURE GENERAL MEETINGS

**APRIL 10TH**  
AL NORTON

**MAY 8TH**  
BURLINGTON 150 ?

*INFORMATION CONTAINED ON OUR WEBSITE, NEWSLETTERS AND PUBLICATIONS IS PRINTED IN GOOD FAITH FOR GENERAL PURPOSES.*

*BHS MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE THE BHS MINI GAZETTE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS AND CAN UNSUBSCRIBE AT ANY TIME.*

## **MARCH ACTIVITIES**

On Monday March 13<sup>th</sup>, we are thrilled to not only have 1 presenter but 2.

- Patricia Taylor
- Chris Mallion-Moore

Their topics:

- Waterfront Sculpture Trail
- Post Cards between 2  
Local teenage girls

**ALL ARE WELCOMED**

## **OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

**Thursday January 5<sup>th</sup> thru Sunday January 8<sup>th</sup>**

BHS spend 4 days in the Burlington Centre HUB community Space with our books, newsletters and the collection of newly created digital signs/posters.

A total of 48 people dropped by to view our BHS materials and chat.

We plan to return to the HUB, right before Burlington Heritage Week in August.

**Tuesday February 14<sup>th</sup>**

We were invited back for a repeat performance at the Burlington Performing Arts Centre on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Frank Penny brought his BIG Band sounds back to the BPAC on Valentine's Day 2023. This music was the music of the Brant Inn era.

We, the BHS, had a display table in the lobby. A goodly number of people stopped to check out the recently donated framed print of the Country Club, which eventually became the Brant Inn.

Many reminisced about going to, or hearing about, an evening at the Brant Inn while viewing our new poster of the Brant Inn. One lady recalled, as a 5- or 6-year-old going to the weekly bingo night with her mom. She enjoyed the evening because she got a special treat to eat.

We also had for sale the book "Brant Inn Memories" and our DVD about the Brant Inn. Hopefully people will recall that the Burlington Historical Society had a display in the foyer.

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

**A very warm welcome to our newest members Don and Janet Kilpatrick, Lynn Taylor, Colin Carlton and Ruth Matheson.**

**Many thanks to those members who have renewed for 2023!**

Reminder – If your **email** address has **changed**, please advise us to ensure your Gazette is delivered to the correct address. To change your email address etc, fill out a Membership Form which can be found on the back table and give it to Patricia Taylor who looks after our Membership.

## **MELONS, DOGS AND MAIL – THIS WOMAN BEAT THE ODDS – by Rick Craven**

**This article was used with the kind permission of Rick Craven.**

Her name was Mabel. You may not have heard of her, but she played an important part in Aldershot's history. It was Mabel Easterbrook who established the now famous hot-dog stand on Spring Gardens Road. That was over ninety years ago.

Mabel was the founder and first of four generations to run Easterbrook's hot-dog restaurant. Without Mabel, it may never have happened.

"My grandmother was quite the entrepreneur," commented grandson Ray Easterbrook, who recently retired from the business.

Today, Mabel's hot-dog stand is a huge success. It has been the subject of many news and magazine articles, visited by a variety of celebrities and most importantly, produced hundreds of thousands of "dogs."

Mabel was born in 1886. She married John Easterbrook and together they purchased a farm around 1926 in the area south of Plains Road between Holy Sepulcher and

Woodland Cemeteries. Along with the fruits and vegetables, they planted the seeds that would later grow into miles of hot dogs.



*Mabel Easterbrook. Photo courtesy of Easterbrook family.*

Mabel and John were not well off. They had taken out a mortgage to buy their farm, but the Great Depression hit and they needed cash. They sold off part of their land and Mabel started to sell produce to passing cars, especially the famous Aldershot sugar maple melons.

Those produce sales later evolved into a tea house.

"She had no money to do anything but she came to realize that all these people driving by might want something to eat, so she started up a tea house with sandwiches and stuff like that," said Ray.

At that time, the part of Plains Road that now curves behind the Royal Botanical Gardens was Highway 2, directly in front of the Easterbrook farm. There was a lot of traffic. It was the main drag between Hamilton and Toronto.

Sometimes, Mabel would even rent out a room in the farmhouse for weary travelers, forcing her husband to sleep in the greenhouse or the barn. Clearly, Mabel was the boss in that family.

“She just kinda eked by,” said Ray.

But Mabel would not let the Depression beat her. In addition to the produce sales, tea house, and occasional motel service, she bought up old ramshackle houses in Hamilton, had horses drag them across the frozen bay, and rented them out as beachfront cottages until they fell apart.

Around 1930, the tea house added hot dogs to the menu. Eventually, the dogs outsold the produce and the rest, as they say, is history. It was struggle for many years, but Mabel ran the place until 1952 through good times and bad.

“Carrying a mortgage through the Depression was very difficult but Mabel managed one nonetheless through sheer determination,” once wrote the *Hamilton Spectator*.

Mabel is remembered for her achievements in leading her family, surviving the Depression, and starting the hot dog stand, but she felt that her greatest moment was when she was named postmistress for the area known as Willow Cove.

Grandson Ray recalls that postal officials had to track her down at the back of the farm, where she was picking tomatoes, in order to swear her in.





*Mabel and the hot dog stand. Mabel in her post-Depression years. Photo courtesy of Easterbrook family.*

"Everyone in Aldershot used to have to come to that hot dog stand to get their mail. I still remember all the cubby-holes where everybody's mail went in. She was very proud that she was the postmistress."

As postmistress, Mabel became a central figure in the community, the source of information and gossip.

There are reports that one time, she purposely placed the mail of a single young woman into the slot of a single young man, forcing them to meet and exchange mail. Mabel's maneuvering eventually worked out and the young couple married.

Ray has fond memories of his grandmother Mabel. "Whenever I brought a girlfriend home, she'd look her up and down and say 'can you sew?'"

There was one day, according to Ray, when Mabel spotted a police officer heading toward the store. There was an illegal slot machine in there.

Mabel picked the whole thing up by herself and hid it in the backyard. Ray says It took three men to hoist it back in.

Mabel died in 1975 at the age of 88 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery. She remains an important figure in local history.

### **Burlington Canal Lighthouse Group – courtesy of Patricia Taylor**

Stewart Patch, from the Burlington Canal Lighthouse Group, spoke to us in May 2022. I attended their meeting in February – I am a member – to find out what progress had been made in respect to the moving of the lighthouse.

They will soon be starting the construction of the foundation for the lighthouse. The next big decision – move the lighthouse on a dolly pulled by a truck/tractor along the ground or on a dolly moved along railway tracks installed for the move? A murmur of approval from several of the room greeted the second option. As far as the lighthouse keeper's cottage, a study regarding mainly the front porch and the back 'summer' kitchen has been completed. The cottage has been moved – maybe more than once – so there is no concern about moving the cottage in a 'heritage context' from its current location if necessary. The front porch at one time probably went right across the front of the cottage. The back kitchen has asbestos in it. It is likely that both structures will be removed. The lead paint used in the cottage doesn't have to be removed – what a time consuming, dangerous job that would be scrapping it off - it can be encased – essentially painted over with special materials. It sounds as if the public boat launch will remain and the Police Marine Unit has expressed an interest in having their station there. A good place for park "facilities" to be incorporated on the landside?

If you like to be down by the water but don't like sand between your toes, this just might be the place to visit when it is completed.



*The Burlington Historical Society*  
Preserving Burlington's History for Today and Tomorrow

### Membership - 2023

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Dues

New Member  Family: \$40.00  Senior: \$25.00

Renewal  Adult: \$30.00

Yes, as a new BHS member I wish to receive the Gazette newsletter and other e-communications and understand I can unsubscribe at any time.

### Volunteer

Are you interested in volunteering with the Society? Would you like to help us in preserving the history of our City? Tell us a bit about your talents and interests – [info@burlingtonhistorical.ca](mailto:info@burlingtonhistorical.ca)

### Donation

I wish to make a separate donation to the society in the sum of \_\_\_\_\_

A Tax Receipt will be issued for all donations totalling \$25.00 or more

The Burlington Historical Society is a registered charity # 119217693RR0001

#### Mail completed form and remittance(s) to:

The Burlington Historical Society  
Membership Director  
PO Box 93164  
1450 Headon Road  
Burlington, Ontario L7M 4A3

Make cheques payable to The Burlington Historical Society

#### OR

e-transfer funds to [info@burlingtonhistorical.ca](mailto:info@burlingtonhistorical.ca)



If you are a new member using e-transfer, please email the completed form to us at the above email

#### OR

Leave it at the Membership table at any General Meeting

[www.burlingtonhistorical.ca](http://www.burlingtonhistorical.ca)

[info@burlingtonhistorical.ca](mailto:info@burlingtonhistorical.ca)

[www.facebook.com/burlington history](https://www.facebook.com/burlingtonhistory)