



Photos by
Hannah Eden

From left, Diane Sule and Marney Black, are both volunteers at Hastings County Historical Society. Together they sort through negatives donated from The Belleville Intelligencer archives. The negatives show images taken by Intelligencer photographers from the 1940's to the early 2000's.

Taking a peek into the past

By Hannah Eden

The Hastings County Historical Society plunged into the past to locate files for the celebration of Sir John A. Macdonald's 200th birthday this week.

In lieu of the Historical Society's bicentennial presentation on Jan. 20, displays have been organized to educate the attending public on the life and works of Canada's first Prime Minister.

Trying to locate documents with Sir John A's signature, photos, legal or personal letters proved to be a big project.

"The challenge is, we have no idea when he was here in Belleville," said Sharon White, chief archivist.

"We don't have any original photos yet we have the ability to trace him. We know he was a lawyer, therefore we started our search in our legal files."

In the run-away train of the digital age, the Historical Society has been working with over 20 volunteers to catalogue everything housed in the archives to create a digital map of the contained records, photographs, newspapers and legal documents.

Volunteers Elizabeth Mitchell, Marney Black and

Diane Sule are currently working to archive and digitally catalogue a huge collection of negatives and prints donated from The Belleville Intelligencer.

"We take the packet of negatives and then log the information about that set into a computer," said Sule.

"We have to note everything from type of film used to date photographed."

This donation of photographs ranging from 1940 to the early 2000's will just make up some of collections to be moved to the Belleville Public Library in late 2015.

Founded in 1957, the Historical Society's main aim is to educate and assist those in local and surrounding communities.

However, with the location of the archives so far away from accessible bus routes, the society has seen a lack of interest in some young people.

"If they don't have a car, it is difficult to get to us," said White.

"This is why we are concentrating on the new move."

Cataloging the archives into a digital log will not only assist the society in their move to the Belleville Public Library, it will also make it easier to locate records during times of historical celebration such as Sir John A. Macdonald's bicentennial.



(Above) Elizabeth Mitchell, retired librarian, volunteers her time at Hastings County Historical Society by archiving negatives donated by The Belleville Intelligencer.

(Right) Jeanne Delaney holds archived photographs of Joe Clark in a back room the volunteer team like to call 'The Vault.'



(Above) Hastings County Historical Society is currently situated on Cannifton Road North. However, with the new move to the downtown core in fall 2015, the society is hoping to gain interest from a younger audience.

(Left) Adele Dibben, volunteer, sits in the photographic room at Hastings County Historical Society. Dibben takes unarchived photos from filing cabinets and catalogues them into silver boxes seen on the back wall.