

Friends of
Meaford Library



94 Bayfield Street, Meaford, Ontario N4L 1N4, Canada

<https://www.friendsofmeafordlibrary.ca>

Among Friends Newsletter

Spring 2024

THE NET SHED: SEEMINGLY UNRECORDED EARLY HISTORY

It's fitting, given 2024 is the 150th anniversary of the creation of the town of Meaford, to look into the history of the building that sustains the FOML. According to The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, the Net Shed "is a modest, weathered building on the east side [sic: actually west side] of the harbour...built in the 1880's..."

<http://www.heritagemeaford.com/heritage-success.php?mid=4>



But so far, no early photos of the Net Shed have been found. *Pictorial Meaford* has a chapter of photos of the Harbour, and on pg. 79, there is a photo of the east side of the harbour [which] was very active with fish houses, sawmills and dockage" but this is on the east side of the harbour and does not reference a Net Shed[s] specifically. I was unable to locate the Net Shed; perhaps others have been successful?

Wikipedia tells us that by the 1880's, Meaford "boasted three planning mills, three carriage factories, two tanneries, a sawmill, a shingle mill, a woolen mill, two foundries, two flour mills, a dozen general stores, and a wide range of other stores and tradesmen. The community also had ten hotels...." Note no mention of a net shed—yet this building is one of the few from this list to have survived!

We know that in the 1870's and 1980's, Meaford was an important fishing port on Georgian Bay. "One of [the] biggest operations in the area was owned by Gilbert McIntosh who fished the waters between Meaford and Tobermory. In the beginning he brought his catch back to port in the

seventeen-ton vessel, "Rescue", but in order to keep up with market demands, in 1885 he added the thirty-ton "Alfred Morell," and shortly thereafter the 50 ton "G.P.

McIntosh" to his fleet." (Paul White, *Great Lakes Stories, Meaford Ontario: The Early Years*).

<https://www.history-articles.com/meaford-ontario.html>

Later, we know that for a number of years, the Perks family operated fishing boats out of Meaford, and used the Net Shed.

The boats are long gone, but the place where the fishermen hung their nets to dry and to mend their nets still exists.

THE NET SHED'S HISTORY: FAST FORWARD TO 1966

We are fortunate that the *Barrie Advance* archived a 2007 article which they republished from the *Meaford Express*. The article reports on a ceremony held on Thanksgiving weekend at the Net Shed to honour Judge Ian McKay and his wife Loretta for their generous donation of the building for the use of the Friends' used book store; the article also provides background information. The McKay family lived in Meaford beginning in 1949 and then moved to Wiarton. Ian McKay was once the "clerk of the town and worked in the legal profession in many different capacities. From 1949 to 1994, the McKays had a sailboat in Meaford Harbour." In 2007, he had only recently retired at the age of 86. In 1966, he bought the Netshed, and added that it was briefly rented to Dee Ross for her craft shop. Then according to Loretta McKay, two members of the Friends, Barb Scheifele and Jean Fitzpatrick approached her and asked if the Netshed was available for a used book store. Loretta remarked, "They've been here ever since. It really is the perfect location." But the article goes on to reveal the initial plans for the land: "Judge McKay also

mentioned that sometimes the best plans are those that don't come to fruition. 'At one time, I was going to put three condos here. I had the plans and everything,' he said."

At the ceremony, the McKays were presented with a beautiful picture of the building.

The present owners of the Netshed, Barb and Norm McKay, continue this gift of the Netshed for our fund raising efforts for the Meaford Library. Barb McKay, in conversation, told me that "she and Norm are pleased to keep up Norm's father's wishes for the use of the Netshed."

As we celebrate Meaford's history and specifically a 1880's building, we need to also celebrate the ongoing support of the McKay family to the Meaford library and our community. Our history isn't just our buildings, it's the history of our generous citizens, like the McKays. The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario agrees: "The owners have made good, and very generous, use of their historical property."

LITTLE LIBRARIES AND OTHER BOOK OUTREACH ACTIVITIES PROVIDED BY THE FRIENDS

While George Coote, in the 2007 *Meaford Express* article, noted that the Netshed is "the backbone of what the Friends of the Library do in Meaford," it isn't the only outreach that the Friends provide.

1. Perhaps you've seen the Little Library at Memorial Park? It's been well-used by campers and visitors and will be up and running again this summer; Board Member, Susanne Wussow will continue to be in charge of replenishing it as needed.
2. A second Little Library has been established at the Harbour, located at the entrance to the Harbour Pavilion. The structure was donated by the Scarecrow committee. Pat King will look after keeping it stocked.



Photo courtesy of Robert Richardson

3. Board Member, Francis Richardson will coordinate with the Long Term Care centre to ensure that books, especially large-print, are available for its residents.
4. Chris Richardson, who runs the Net Shed, has been supplying books for the book cart at the Meaford Library for a number of years.

(Many thanks for their continued help to Susanne and Chris, and to the new support from Pat and Francis.)

These endeavours to bring books to many Meaford residents and guests is the way our Friends of Meaford Library “build community, inspire readers and expand book access for all”. Here I’ve borrowed the goals of the Little Free Library based in the U.S. According to the Washington Post’s *Book Club* from May 17, 2024, “There are more than 180,000 registered Little Free Libraries around the world. Over the last 15 years, an estimated 400 million books have been shared.”

While we haven’t shared *quite* that many books, the goal of all of our sites—in the spirit of the Little Free Library—is to ensure access to books for the whole community and to visitors, and not insignificantly, to donate money to our wonderful library.

CONCERT DATES AND ARTISTS

All concerts are held at the Meaford Harbour Pavillion starting at 7 pm.

- June 23: The Rice Family
- June 30: River & Rock
- July 7: The Mill Pond Project
- July 14: Dave Hawkins
- July 21: The Browns
- July 28: Beaver Valley Concert Band
- August 4: Allan Johnson
- August 11: Amanda Dorey
- August 18: Bill Monahan
- August 25: Richard & Anne Ebbs
- September 1: Bored of Education

With thanks to Paul Wehrle for organizing the line-up and arranging for the equipment set-ups and technical support for the concerts. He has been doing this for many years, and it is certainly a fixture in Meaford on a summer Sunday night! The pay-what-you-can donations have contributed greatly to the FOML’s treasury.

The Rice Family – June 23



The Rice name and family are well-known in the Georgian Bay communities for music. Waverly has had a popular combo for many years based on Waverly and his

brother Barry and several other well-known local part-time musicians. The original group has just recently retired but Waverly’s music and style are timeless and his son, Martin, who has his own style and crew, carries on many of Waverly’s traditions getting the family together for occasions such as performing as the Friends of Meaford Library kick-off concert for its summer Sunday evening concert series. They will be doing so again this year as they have or over 20 years. They regularly feature a guest appearance by Scott Merrifield who will, along with his son, Mitch entertain us with their unique vocal offerings. The Rice’s stylings include highly popular traditional and modern, light country with some 60s and 70s pop rock-n-roll thrown in ... an evening of upbeat and toe-tappin’ entertainment.

River & Rock – June 30



River & Rock was born as a songwriting project that quickly morphed into much more. The core of the band, as well as the creative forces, John Hume and Beaker Granger step out here as a duo.

John Hume spent his formative years playing nightly Piano Bar gigs in Toronto. More recently, John has been tapped as Artistic Director for The Last Waltz, of

Woodstock 50 and the SOUVENIRS – Remembering John Pine theatre shows. John remains an in-demand Keyboardist on the local scene.

Beaker Grange brings with him years of touring internationally, as part of Canadian folk rockers RPR, UK's legendary Magna Carta, John Ritchie Band, Gracie Jet and others. More locally, he can be found behind the Drumkit with Tinman and the Flying Monkeys, Horseshoes and Handgrenades, as well as many theatre shows. You can also find him out fronting the SOUVENIRS show with guitar in hand, not to mention solo here and there.

Always an engaging experience, River and Rock is Music of life ... and life is good.

The Mill Pond Project – July 7



This year, The Friends of the Meaford Library are pleased to introduce the Mill Pond Project. The band is a collective of generally 4 local part-time musicians (the name is from the millpond in Massie) who have performed regularly throughout Grey and Bruce counties for several years. They have provided music for a variety of events such as soloists for weddings, as duets

for easy listening at vineyards, and as classic rock performers for all sorts of celebrations, including several years as a New Years Eve band.

Band members come from different musical backgrounds and now generally play classical Rock and Folk Rock music with hints of Pop and Blues thrown in. They like to think of themselves as “entertainers” and love to engage their audiences throughout their shows. For this performance, they will entertain as a duet with guitar and bass and harmonizing vocals. They hope everyone who comes out has a wonderful time enjoying LIVE music!

Dave Hawkins – July 14



This year, The Friends of Meaford Library are pleased once again to introduce Dave Hawkins to the Sunday Concert Series. Dave is a talented and passionate songwriter, and gifted at the art of song sharing as well. Dave has decades of entertaining experience but now spends his time writing and performing his original acoustic music. He sings with a smooth, velvety voice; pure joy dancing in his eyes as he shares his songs. Now centered in

Owen Sounds, Dave Hawkins performs at venues a Grey and Bruce counties and beyond. This year he will be joined by his wife Trish, who will sing harmony vocals and some lead vocals. The first set will be some of Dave's original songs and the second set will be timeless country songs. Trish and Dave have sung together for 30 years in various bands. Trish Hawkins also sang backup and harmony for 15 years in an Elvis tribute band with Peter Irwin.

The Browns – July 21



The Brown's are a husband/wife musical duo to have both individually been part of the Canadian music scene for more than 40 years. Doug continues to study guitar daily while indulging in his gift for songwriting and composing. Heather is a trained vocalist having previously sung with several choirs and bands, as well as appearing on TV. Through a smooth blend of voice and guitar they perform a Classic Lite Rock, Classic 50s & 60s, Classic Country, Classic Folk and Classic Christmas. Doug and Heather have been performing as a team for 12 years. Currently they are very active in our community and bring their

special adaptations of classic chart hits to a wide number of audiences at venues and events in the Georgian Bay region. They perform 12 months of the year for many special occasions and special events including family reunions, anniversaries, weddings, summer patios, plus restaurant settings (afternoons and evenings), seniors in nursing homes, retirement homes and community living venues. They are always willing to travel outside the immediate area for an event!

Beaver Valley Concert Band – July 28



It has been a long tradition in smaller communities for musicians to gather and share their love of music and their talents by forming small groups and bands. The Meaford Citizen's Band was a fixture from the late 1800s until the very early 1970s. There are pictures in the Meaford Museum of the band from 1967 and 1968 concerts plus the band was resurrected in 1974 to play for the Meaford Centennial. Charlie Strimas was the last director of the band, late 60s into the 70s. There are still a couple of that group around, one of whom is Kevin Knight.

The current incarnation is the Beaver Valley Concert Band which started in 1990 when a few

musicians in the Blue Mountains got together to jam. Originally called Valley Concert Band, the group had a name change and became the Beaver Valley Concert Band 15 or 20 years ago to identify with the larger area the current musicians are drawn from. The band was originally based in Thornbury where it rehearsed until 2020 when the pandemic shut the world down. When the band was able to restart in September 2022, the decision was made to locate in Collingwood, a more central location for band members and, the move provided a larger catchment of potential players. The band proved last year that it has rebounded and anxious to carry on a long-standing tradition of local musicians enjoying music and performing for the entertainment of their neighbours and friends. Rehearsals are now at Trinity United Church in Collingwood on Monday evening from 6 to 7:30 under the direction of Lesley Joosten.

LOOKING FOR A NEW NEWSLETTER EDITOR OR EDITORS!

Ingrid and I are stepping down from editorial duties publishing two newsletters a year. The Editor is expected to sit on the FOML Board (regular monthly meetings spring, summer and fall). Please get in touch with Leslie Ransom, President of the Board if you're interested; ransomleslie@yahoo.com.

Newsletter Editors:

Mary-Louise Craven and
Ingrid Knisely

