



DUNDAS  
MUSEUM &  
ARCHIVES

# UPDATE

AUTUMN  
2023



BRIDGES OVER DESJARDINS CANAL

Feature Exhibition:  
**THE RAGIN' CANAWL**



# DUNDAS MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

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# FROM THE BOARD

Welcome to the best museum in Ontario!

Moving to Dundas was one of the best things that happened in my life. As a child, I established lifelong relationships and soon realized how special this place is. I grew up on Park St., and back in the 60s, you were told to go out and play and be back when the streetlights came on.

I met the neighbourhood kids and they showed me around the Driving Park, the downtown stores, the escarpment, the factories, etc. My mother was very interested in history, so I had my first introduction to the Dundas Museum. I remember how quiet it was and even the distinctive atmosphere. The curator,

Olive Newcombe, greeted us and gave us a tour, but I only remember the toys in the back gallery and the general store in the basement. I never thought I would have the honour and privilege of serving on the Board of Directors and becoming the Board's President and Chair.

Growing up in Dundas over the years has been amazing and people move here for many reasons, but the small-town spirit that Dundas creates and the feeling of belonging are key. Our history has created a vibrant community that is alive and well and will be for years to come, thanks to our amazing staff, volunteers and board members.

We are so lucky that our founder, Graham Bertram, had the vision and passion to start the collection and the resources to build this historic legacy and a place to tell our story.

- Keith Green  
*Board President/Chair*



*Outgoing Board President & Chair, Russ Powers (left) with his successor, Keith Green (right).*

## ON NOW (and coming soon!)

### 1st Gallery:

#### AQUIENTOR:

Iroquoian Armour and  
Weaponry

August 31st to  
November 18th 2023

### Pirie House:

#### URBAN CHAOS

*Keith Green's mixed  
media show.*

July 22nd to  
September 28th 2023

#### HOME/GROUND:

The Art of  
Catherine Gibbon  
(1949-2021)

October 4th to  
December 2nd, 2023

### Feature Exhibition:

#### "THE RAGIN' CANAWL"

*The Story of the  
Desjardins Canal*

June 17th, 2023 -  
January 13 2024

# EDUCATION

Well, I have put off writing this as long as physically possible. As many will now be aware, I have resigned my position at Dundas Museum to pursue a new and exciting opportunity with Hamilton Public Library. So, I won't be going far!

The last six years have been some of the most enjoyable, challenging, rejuvenating, heart-breaking, and best years of my career. When I began the role of Education and Events Coordinator in September of 2017, I had no idea what the next several years would bring. From the Ontario Museum Association Award-winning Finding Hazel project in 2019 to the record-breaking Made in Dundas event in 2023, we have had some truly incredible achievements. Despite the extreme challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic including repeated closures, working from home, and navigating mandates, I believe we made

the best of an unimaginably difficult situation and came out stronger on the other side. We have developed amazing partnerships with local schools like Dundas Central Public School and Providence Christian School. We have run some extremely fun events like ghost tours, escape rooms, a giant cardboard fort for Family Day, a beer festival, scotch tastings, and five of our beloved Made in Dundas Community Family Festivals. We developed virtual programming, curbside pick up activity kits, and sold almost 1,000 Made in Dundas Boxes, raising over \$26,000 for the Museum's education program and putting \$67,000 into the local economy during the toughest time in recent memory. I truly could not be more proud of our team here at Dundas Museum and Archives and everything we have accomplished over the last six years.

I want to thank our dedicated volunteers, Board of Directors, members, vendors, event partners, speakers, musicians, local organizations, teachers, sponsors, educators, advisors, donors, and community for your support of the museum and its education programs and events. None of what we do is possible without this support.

Most of all, I want to thank our team, past and present, at Dundas Museum and Archives. I am the luckiest person to have worked with such a creative, caring, knowledgeable, and hysterically funny group of people. You made coming to work a true joy. Kevin, Seve, Austin, Marley, and Kelsey, I am going to miss you all so much but I'm so excited to see what happens next. To quote Leslie Knope, "what makes work worth doing is getting to do it with people you love."

Thank you for everything and see you soon!

- Anna Patterson  
*(Former) Education, Events & Volunteer Coordinator*



## STAFF

**Kevin Puddister**  
Curator &  
General Manager

**Severine Craig**  
Collections Manager &  
Assistant General Manager

**Kelsey Haas**  
Archivist

**Marley Beach**  
Administrative &  
Marketing Coordinator

**Anna Patterson**  
Education, Events &  
Volunteer Coordinator

**Austin Strutt**  
Exhibitions Curator

**Museum Attendants**  
Victoria Caravaggio  
Richard Griffin  
Kaya Ryszczak  
Dakota Owens

# EXHIBITIONS

Our special Community Curator exhibition this fall is *Aquientor: Reconstructing the Forgotten Armour of the Precolonial Iroquoians*, guest curated by

Malcolm Kahyonhakonh Powless-Lynes.

Our popular understanding of north-eastern indigenous warriors is one

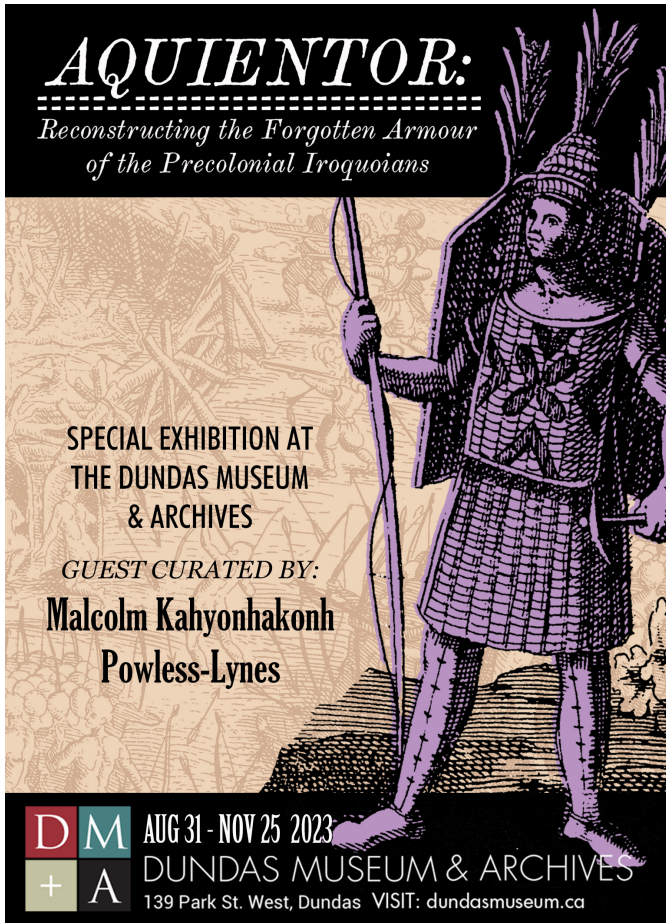
that is primarily shaped by dime-novels and Hollywood movies. Unlike the naked, feathered warriors of fiction, early sources from European colonists of the 17th century describe Iroquoian men in full panoply of wooden armour arrayed for battle.

“They wear also a sort of armour and cuirass, which they call *Aquientor*, on their back and legs and other parts of the body to get protection from arrow-shots” writes Sagard, a 17th century Recollect Missionary of New France.

“These cuirasses are made of white rods cut to the same length and pressed against one another sewn and interlaced with little cords, very tightly and neatly. Then (they have) a buckler or shield and the ensign or flag, which is (at least those which I have seen are) a round piece of tree-bark, with the armo-

rial bearings of their town or province painted upon it, and fastened to the end of a long stick, like a cavalry pennant.”

These descriptions, along with an enigmatic illustration from the works of Samuel de Champlain inspired local amateur historian Malcolm Powless-Lynes to embark on a project to reconstruct a plausible design of this forgotten aspect of Six-Nations Culture, long since made obsolete by the introduction of firearms. Pairing these historical references with sources from indigenous archeology, Malcolm has created a display which offers a window into a world which existed here on the eve of colonial upheaval.



## Happening in the Pirie House:

**Monday Evenings:**

**Meditation Group**

**7:00-8:30pm**

[lindsay@knightpfiffer.com](mailto:lindsay@knightpfiffer.com)

**Tuesday Evenings:**

**Overflow Yoga**

**7:00-8:00pm:**

[overflowyoga@gmail.com](mailto:overflowyoga@gmail.com)

**Wednesday Evenings:**

**Mindfulness & Movement**

**7:00-8:00pm:**

**Dance Fitness Class**

[aguyatt7@gmail.com](mailto:aguyatt7@gmail.com)

**Saturday Mornings:**

**Mindfulness & Movement**

**9:30-10:30am:**

**Dance Fitness Class**

[aguyatt7@gmail.com](mailto:aguyatt7@gmail.com)

# EXHIBITIONS

Our current Feature Exhibition, *THE RAGIN' CANAWL! An Authentic History of the Desjardins Canal & The Port of Dundas*, runs from June 17th 2023 to January 13th 2024. We asked Exhibitions Curator Austin Strutt to answer a few commonly asked questions about the show:

**Q:** Firstly, what was the Desjardins Canal? Was Dundas really a port town?

**A:** The Desjardins Canal was an artificial watercourse (essentially a massive ditch) dredged through the shallow marsh of Cootes Paradise that connected the Town of Dundas to the deeper waters of Lake Ontario near Hamilton Harbour. It made it possible to sail a ship right into the Dundas Valley. So yes, for much of the 19th century, Dundas was a port town!

**Q:** What made you want to do an exhibit on the Canal?

**A:** The Desjardins Canal is one of the most significant factors that has shaped Dundas' history. Indeed it transformed much of the community into what it is today.

In the age before railways, almost all commerce was conducted by water. The Canal effectively made

Dundas the westernmost point of navigation for Lake Ontario, and it turned Dundas into the receiving point for farm goods from the rural communities to the north and west. Farmers poured into the Town to sell their goods and it brought enormous wealth to the valley. Even today, most of the buildings on King St. can be categorized either as former groceries, where farm produce was traded for goods that were brought in on the Canal, or former taverns and hotels, where farmers spent the night (and some of their newly earned money) while their goods were being loaded onto ships.

The residential areas of Dundas were also transformed. George Rolph, who owned most of the north-east quarter of Dundas, decided to sell his massive property in the mid-1850s just as the Canal business was booming. The various businessmen and grocers of Dundas put their new-found wealth into building their dream homes in much of what is now the Cross/Melville heritage district. The decline of the canal in the late 19th century also ensured that these Victorian homes would be preserved, and not built over

as they were in the rapidly industrializing City of Hamilton. It was the Canal that gave us the Dundas we know today.

**Q:** Tell us about the "Curse of the Canal"?

**A:** Ah yes, idle talk over last century about the "Curse of the Canal" has bred the misconception that the Canal was an ill-fated endeavour that never prospered. In reality, the Canal was extremely prosperous! However, a number of incidents seem to have plagued the Canal and those who stood to profit most off of it. The Canal's namesake, Peter Desjardins, died mysteriously while out collecting shares owed on the project ten years prior to completion. His death certificate reads "Died by Visitation of God". Then, cholera swept the community during the Canal's construction and many of the labourers fell victim and were buried in a mass grave off York Road. Of course there is the famous 1857 Canal Disaster, when a train bound for Hamilton plummeted off the swing bridge over the Canal and into the icy water below, killing 59 people. And then there was the drowning of the son and daughter of Dundas Mayor James Coleman, who had become

Dundas' first millionaire off profits earned on the Canal. Both his children and two other young people were drowned in a boating accident on the Desjardins Canal in 1865, shocking the community and ruining Coleman's plans for his own legacy. There are more, but you must see the exhibit...

**Q:** What is your favourite artifact in the show?

**A:** A hard choice, but I was delighted to find a poem published in an 1850 *Dundas Warder* containing some verses on the Canal, set to the tune of Yankee Doodle. They run:

*"Old Dundas lives,"  
our neighbours say,*

*"Upon a Ditch,"  
(quite scornful.)*

*But well will we, and  
WELLS the way,*

*Shew it won't make us  
mournful.*

*When Summer comes,  
and all the wheat*

*Down Gov'nors, Brock,  
and Rolph's Roads,*

*Comes pouring in, we'll  
show how neat*

*We'll save a thousand  
team loads.*

# ARCHIVES

## ARCHIVAL HIGHLIGHT: 1944 Airgraph

During WWII, Britain and the Eastman Kodak Company partnered together to use existing microfilm technology to solve a problem: with limited space on planes, ordinary letters had to be sent overseas by ship which took upwards of months to reach their destination. With the airgraph process, letters were photographed on the send-

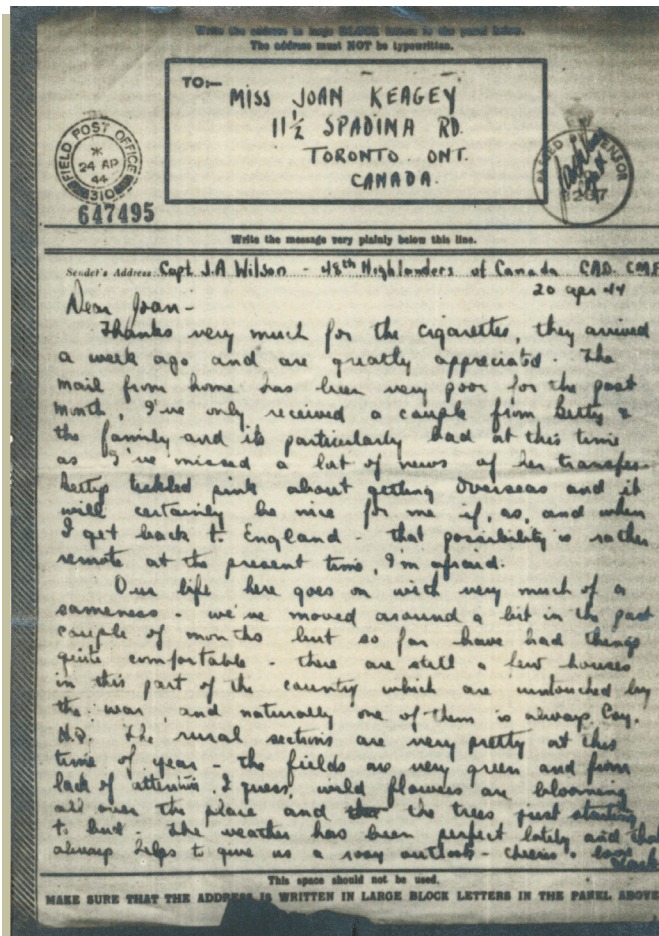
ing end and the reels of negatives were sent by air to their destination where they were printed and delivered. The reels of film were less than 1/50 the size and weight of the original letters they contained so large volumes of letters could be delivered faster at a relatively low cost.

This airgraph was sent to Joan Keagey by Captain J.A. (Jack)

Wilson of the 48th Highlanders on April 20th, 1944. In the letter, he thanks Joan for sending him a parcel of cigarettes and describes being in a rural area surrounded by green fields and wildflowers. Capt. Jack Wilson was the son of Richard Steele Wilson and Mabel Milne Wilson and the husband of Elizabeth Stewart Wilson of Toronto.

Sadly, Capt. Wilson was killed in action on May 23rd, 1944, not long after this airgraph was sent. More information about Capt. Wilson and the 48th Highlanders can be found in the book *Dileas: A History of the 48th Highlanders of Canada 1929-1956* by Kim Beattie.

- Kelsey Haas  
Archivist



**“It is only by reason of their light weight that it has been possible to arrange for airgraph mails to be given air transportation over certain sections of the route they will follow. Ordinary air mails cannot be given air transmission over such sections because of their weight and the demand which exists for space for other more urgent purposes.**

# COLLECTIONS

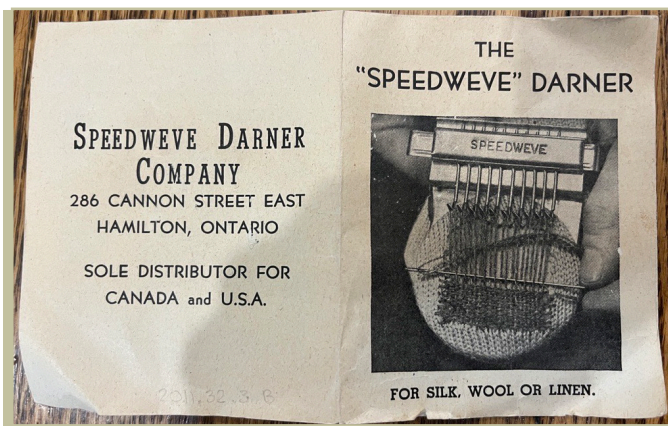
## ARTIFACT HIGHLIGHT: Speedweve Darner



The "Speedweve Darner" is an example of a mini loom, an invention that became popular during the 1940s and 50s. Although mending one's clothes was a common practice, with the introduction of rationing during the Second World War, it became more important than ever to extend the life of existing clothes. The Speedweve brand darner was made by the E&A Chestok company in Manchester, England and was produced in the U.K. and Canada.

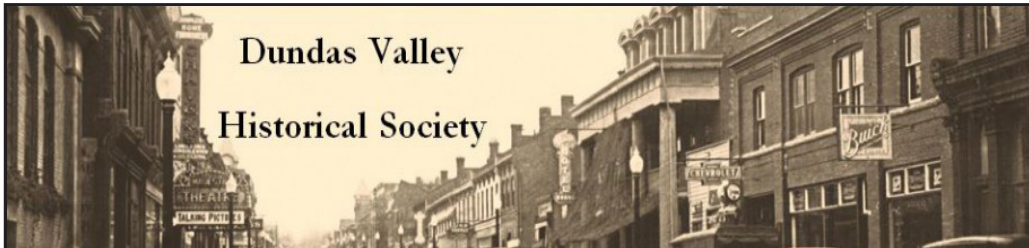
This device allows you to easily warp your mending thread over the area in need of repair. Simply fold the hooks from side to side to weave your thread through and create a quick patch. You can still purchase modern versions of this today!

- Severine Craig  
Collections Manager/  
Assistant General Manager



H.G. Bertram  
FOUNDATION

The DM+A is grateful for the support from our  
**FRIENDS of the MUSEUM**  
and these major supporters



## Dundas Valley Historical Society

The Dundas Valley Historical Society returns for its monthly Speaker Series!  
Presentations take place Thursday evenings and begin promptly at 7:00pm.

Members of the DVHS attend free, otherwise admission is just \$4.

• • •

September 14th: Local historian Robin McKee presents on notable figures found in the Hamilton Cemetery.

October 12th: DMA Exhibitions Curator Austin Strutt presents on Desjardins Canal, based on his research for our current Feature Exhibition, "The Ragin' Canawl".

November 9th: Biochemical engineer Peter Child returns to the DVHS to present part two of "And Then There Was Light — The Day Gas Lighting Came to Dundas".

## OUR VISION

A welcoming space where the community can engage with Dundas' past.

## RENT

The DMA Education Centre is available to rent for your event!  
[Contact us today.](#)

## DONATE

In-person, by mail or at [support.dundasmuseum.ca](http://support.dundasmuseum.ca)

Your donation supports our ongoing work and collections.



DUNDAS  
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## HOURS

Tues	10:30 am	4:30 pm
Wed	10:30 am	4:30 pm
Thu	10:30 am	8:00 pm
Fri	10:30 am	4:30 pm
Sat	1:00 pm	4:00 pm
Sun & Mon	Closed	

## VISIT US

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