

OHS BULLETIN

ISSUE 227

Spring 2026

THE NEWSLETTER *of the* ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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- Heritage Passport: Rideau Lakes
- History of Indigenous Peoples in Rideau Lakes: An Archaeological Approach
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courtesy of Fort Erie
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OHS BULLETIN

The *OHS Bulletin* is the newsletter of the Ontario Historical Society (OHS).

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ONTARIO
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY Since 1888

ED'S REPORT

DANIEL DISHAW

Executive Director

ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca

Greetings from the board and the staff of the OHS,

I want to start by thanking all of our members for their ongoing support and feedback as we worked towards building a new [Strategic Plan for the Ontario Historical Society \(2026-30\)](#). Our new direction was informed first and foremost by the needs of our members, as shared with staff and Directors in 2024 and 2025 through various consultations, town hall meetings, and online surveys.

At our Annual General Meeting on December 9, the Society's membership adopted the Strategic Plan. I'm very pleased to report that staff have begun implementing programs and services aimed at fulfilling the objectives outlined in the new plan, which prioritizes expansion of support for our members through capacity building programs and resources.



The OHS is launching a new Capacity Building Initiative, which will deliver two unique training and education series per year. Each series will feature a variety of sessions focusing on a defined theme relevant to heritage sector not-for-profits, volunteers, and professionals. Sessions will be delivered by subject-matter experts through virtual meetings and workshops. Each series will also be accompanied by a set of expertly curated resources and templates made available to all participants.

The Society is currently rebuilding its website to include an OHS Resource Library, where all of the session recordings and accompanying resource packages will be stored for ongoing member access. We look forward to launching the new website and the resource library this summer. In the meantime, we are very pleased to be launching the first capacity building series of 2026:

Series 1: Governance & Succession Planning

Led by Benjamin Miller of the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN), this first series is designed to help OHS members expand upon their understanding of roles and responsibilities as not-for-profits, their legal and regulatory obligations, how to run effective meetings, and how to engage in ongoing succession planning to develop better continuity and sustainability within the organization. The series will consist of four sessions:

Session 1: Governance 101 – (April 28, 4-6 PM)

This online workshop will cover the rights and roles of members, directors, and officers, paying particular attention on the roles of the conventional officer positions (chair, treasurer, and secretary).

Session 2: Meetings 101 – (Date TBA)

This workshop will cover the 5 Ws of board membership and the process of board meetings and members' meetings from a legal point of view.

Session 3: Succession Planning – (Date TBA)

This session will be a hands-on workshop going through the steps for creating a succession plan, building a pipeline of leadership, and preparing a transition document. The session will also touch on more granular needs, such as obtaining a company key and getting access to company accounts.

Session 4: Office Hours (Open Workshop) – (Date TBA)

Members will be invited to bring their specific questions and examples to discuss and work through with Benjamin Miller.

I look forward to seeing many of our members in attendance for these sessions. Your feedback on the delivery of this program is most welcome as we work on developing the next series. Thank you once again for all of your continued support and engagement.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy spring and summer from the Board of Directors and staff of the Ontario Historical Society.

HERITAGE PASSPORT

Explore Ontario



1

Old Stone Mill

Delta, Ontario



Photo by Ken Watson

The Old Stone Mill in Delta, Ontario, is a National Historic Site showcasing milling technology and 1800s industrial heritage. The mill was built in 1810 and is one of the finest examples of early industrial architecture in the region. The Mill offers frequent milling and blacksmithing demonstrations to the public for free. Donations are greatly appreciated. [You can find more information about the Mill and upcoming events on their website.](#) Open daily from Victoria Day Weekend until Labour Day weekend, 10:00 AM. to 5:00 PM.

44 King St, Delta, ON K0E 1G0

2

Chaffey's Lock & Lockmaster's House Museum

Elgin, Ontario



Photo by John Ronson

Built in 1844 as a low-cost substitute for a blockhouse to defend the canal against American-based raiders, the Chaffey's Lockmaster's house was originally a one-storey limestone building. The house was once the social centre of Chaffey's—it had the only phone in the village and served as the local post office. After extensive renovations, the museum opened in 1982. A permanent exhibit is installed on the main floor, depicting the history of the house and Chaffey's Lock.

For more information, visit the [Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society website.](#)

1724 Chaffey's Lock Road, Elgin, ON K0G 1E0

3

Red Brick Schoolhouse

Elgin, Ontario



Photo by Diane Haskins

Active from 1887 to 1964, this historic schoolhouse is operated by the [Elgin and Area Heritage Society](#). Since 2003, it has been meticulously restored by the Society and hosts many community events and historical exhibitions. Check [the Society's Facebook](#) page for more information and upcoming events.

3 Halladay St, Elgin, ON K0G 1E0

4

Westport Museum

Westport, Ontario



Photo: Westport Museum Facebook Page

This regional museum located in the village of Westport provides an inside perspective on the early history of Rideau Lakes through artifacts, imagery, and stories. For more information on the hours and collection, visit the museum's website: <https://villageofwestport.ca/rideau-district-museum/>

29 Bedford St, Westport, ON K0G 1X0

5

Newboro Blockhouse

Newboro, Ontario



Photo by Rosanne Lake

One of only four blockhouses built on the Rideau Canal, this building features thick walls designed to withstand cannon fire and a tin sheathed roof to defy torching. Situated on a knoll to observe the lock and channel, the blockhouse can hold a 20-man garrison and house the lockmaster. August 15 and 16 there will be an open house from 10 am to 3 pm. Contact the [NAHS](#) for more information.

10 Blockhouse Lane, Newboro, ON K0G 1E0

6

Emmanuel Heritage Centre

Portland, Ontario



Photo by Matthew Liteplo

Built in 1861 of fine local sandstone at the crest of Portland Hill, the Emmanuel Heritage Centre stands as the landmark of the village and hosts events and concerts throughout the year. Find out more through the [Portland on the Rideau Historical Society](#).

2767 ON-15, Portland, ON K0G 1V0

"Heritage Passport" continued on p.15

MUSEUM MILESTONES

By Dr. John Carter

drjohncarter@bell.net

In this edition of Museum Milestones, we journey to the Region of Niagara to the Fort Erie Historical Museum. Curator of Collections, Conservation and Research, Jessica Steffler, provides a useful background to this site. Do make a visit to this multi-faceted museum when you are next in the vicinity of Ridgeway, enjoy it, as well a visit to Niagara Falls, and the wonderful wine and food of the area.

As of July 2025, the Halton Region Museum is closed. The Region will begin to deaccession 30,000 artifacts, photographs, and archival documents. This is a sudden reversal of what was endorsed in a 2021 operational plan, which included \$8 million for a new heritage centre.

The Fashion History Museum (FHM), formerly located in Cambridge, had previously closed its doors. We are very pleased to learn that FHM has just signed a three-year lease for a storefront museum in downtown Stratford, directly behind the Stratford City Hall. The front third of the main floor will be for Encore Vintage, a retail space for the FHM. There will also be space to work with the collection, produce online programming, and offer workshops and tours for small groups. The museum will also be developing travelling exhibits to be showcased at Castle Kilbride and Gallery Stratford. Congratulations to all involved!

The Sikh Museum of Canada, located in Mississauga, recently experienced a small fire above the museum's space that triggered the sprinkler system and flooded the museum. Work is now underway to conserve all damaged artifacts and to restore the museum building. Galleries and collections were badly damaged. Restoration and rebuilding this facility is to be undertaken, and a fund raising initiative is under way.

The Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre, located in the sanctuary of the Carlisle United Church, in the municipality of North Middlesex is now open. The former National Presbyterian Museum was moved from Toronto, and is now located six kilometres from Ailsa Craig. Curator Ian Mason welcomes visitation by appointment. He can be

contacted at pcheritagecentre@gmail.com.

The John R. Park Homestead in Essex County, has reopened to the public after a \$1-million restoration. The Horse Barn is currently undergoing structural restoration and the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) is raising funds to undertake priority restoration and repairs of the original calf, hog, grain, and tobacco barns, where \$312,000 of needed repair work has been identified. Donations to support this work can be made through the ERCA Foundation, at foundation@erca.org.

The Niagara on the Lake Museum has received \$2 million from the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund for their \$5-million expansion project, which will provide more exhibition space to display historical artifacts. RBC Foundation also extended a Community Spaces Grant of \$150,000 to enhance the museum's accessibility. Amy Klassen is the new director at this site and Shawna Jarman becomes the curator. Congratulations to all involved.

I'm sad to report that my good friend and colleague (and long-time OHS volunteer) Chris Raible, passed away on February 13 in Seattle, Washington, at the age of 92. Chris worked as an interpreter at Mackenzie House in Toronto for several years. Later in their lives, Chris and his wife Pat moved to Creemore and opened a book store there. Chris was the driving force behind various heritage initiatives in Creemore. He was also known as an expert on William Lyon Mackenzie, and was a well-known historian, author, and public speaker. His work on Prisoners' boxes, published by the York Pioneer & Historical Society, is regarded as the standard text on this topic. Our condolences to Pat Raible and the rest of the Raible clan. We will miss Chris.



Chris Raible (left) and John Carter in 2021.
Photo by Darryl Withrow



The Battle of Ridgeway Heritage Park is a National Historic Site and the location of the 1866 Battle of Ridgeway.

Fort Erie Museum and Cultural Services

Exploring Thousands of Years of History

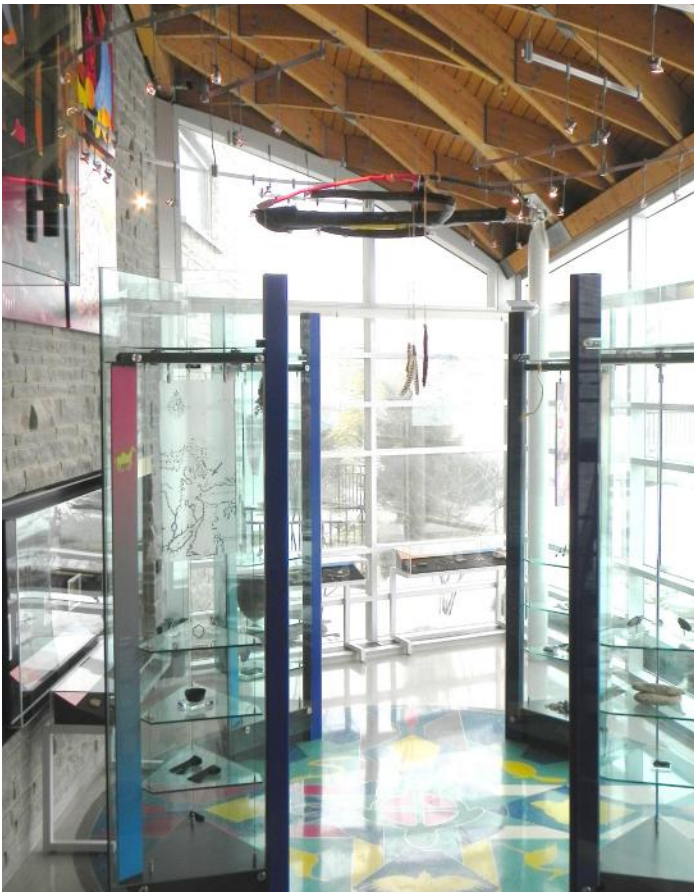
By Jessica Steffler

Curator – Collections, Conservation, and Research, Town of Fort Erie
museum@forterie.ca

Fort Erie has a rich and diverse history dating back at least 12,500 years. Indigenous history, archaeology, military conflicts, cross-border living, and the railway are just a sampling of the breadth and depth of Fort Erie's stories. Located on the shores of the Niagara River and Lake Erie, visitors can explore the five sites managed by the [Town of Fort Erie's Museum and Cultural Services](#): Battle of Ridgeway Heritage Park, *Mewinzha* – A Journey Back in Time, The Bridge that Peace Built, Fort Erie Historical Museum, and Fort Erie Railway Museum.

The Battle of Ridgeway Heritage Park is a National Historic Site. The battle that occurred on this site in 1866 has been called a catalyst to Canada's Confederation. It was here that the Fenian Brotherhood

(Irish nationalists based in the United States) fought Canadian forces. The Fenians' plan was to take British North America hostage and use this as leverage to negotiate with the British for Ireland's independence. Although the Fenians won this battle, they failed to achieve their ultimate goal of Irish independence. This battle highlighted a lack of national defence and bolstered nationalist sentiment; and Confederation resulted one year later. There are interpretive plaques throughout the park, including memorials to the fallen soldiers of the Queen's Own Rifles and 13th Battalion (Royal Hamilton Light Infantry), a memorial cairn, and a timeline of key events. A cabin and a historic ironwood tree that were both "witness" to the Battle of Ridgeway are also situated on this site, near the corner of Garrison and Ridge Roads.



The Mewinzha gallery features artifacts from the Peace Bridge Archaeological Site and contemporary Indigenous artwork.

Mewinzha – A Journey Back in Time features artifacts from the Peace Bridge Archaeological Site as well as contemporary Indigenous art, and speaks to the continued presence of Indigenous peoples in the Fort Erie area. Covering an estimated 24 hectares and spanning almost 4,000 years of virtually continuous occupation, the Peace Bridge site is one of the largest and most significant archaeological sites in northeastern North America. The gallery includes a partial slate gorget (armor to protect the throat and neck) with two thunderbird etchings, a birdstone carving, tools and weapons dating back almost 11,000 years, and a Transitional Woodland cooking vessel from 675 AD. Through archaeological analysis of this vessel, the contents of a 1,300-year-old stew that was cooking in this pot were identified. This gallery is in the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority at 100 Queen Street.

Also located at this site is the gallery, The Bridge That Peace Built. In 1925, building began on the Peace Bridge between Fort Erie and Buffalo. A newspaper

account from 1925 noted: “Let us trust that the structure that is to bring the people of these two great countries into closer contact will serve also to increase mutual respect and appreciation and prolong indefinitely the years of peace.” The Peace Bridge opened to the public on June 1, 1927.

The Fort Erie Historical Museum features exhibits on the numerous villages, towns, and hamlets that make up greater Fort Erie, each with its own unique character and history. Military exhibits include 23 watercolour paintings, c.1866, by Alexander von Erichsen depicting the Battle of Ridgeway and Fenian Raid, as well as medals and swords from this nationally significant battle. Another exhibit focuses on Lance Corporal Patrick Dearborn from Ridgeway, who served with the US Marine Corps in Vietnam. He was killed in 1967, just days before his nineteenth birthday. The exhibit includes a heartfelt letter from Patrick to his mother. This site is at 402 Ridge Road North in the former Bertie Township Hall.

The Fort Erie Railway Museum houses the CN 6218 Engine, the CN Caboose #79138, Ridgeway Station, and B-1 Station. The railway features prominently in Fort Erie’s history, having had at one time the third largest rail yard in Canada. CN 6218 is one of the last 4-8-4 Northern steam locomotives that ran in Canada. Railway artifacts and the exhibit, The Romance and the Reality, are currently on display in Ridgeway Station. Outdoor interpretive plaques can be found throughout the museum grounds that provide more history about the rolling stock and stations of 20th century rail travel. The site is located at 400 Central Avenue.



The Fort Erie Railway Museum celebrates a long and rich railway history.

With a rich and broad history spanning thousands of years, there is no shortage of interesting museums and fascinating stories to explore in Fort Erie.

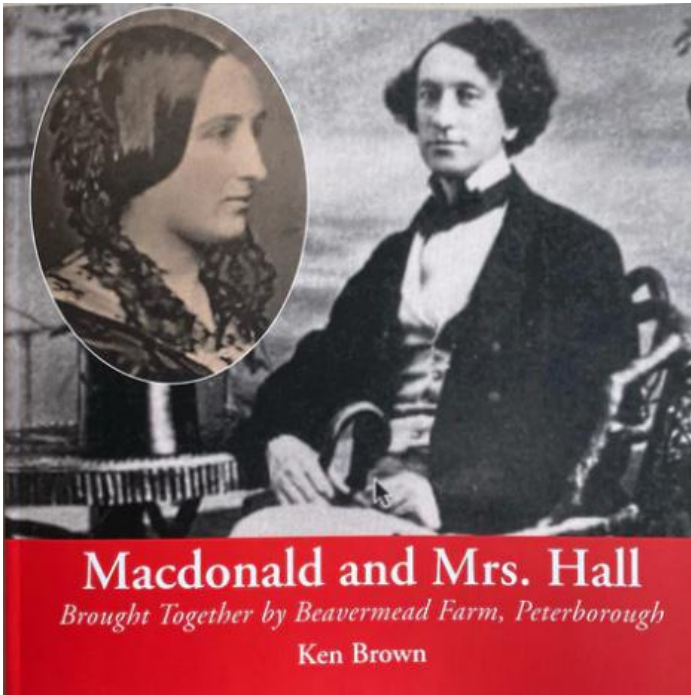
FROM *the* BOOKSHELF

By Dr. Keith R. Fleming

kfleming@uwo.ca

Macdonald and Mrs. Hall: Brought Together by Beavermead Farm, Peterborough

By Ken Brown



In recent years, Sir John A. Macdonald's public reputation has been more closely scrutinized and harshly criticized than any other prominent figure from Canada's past. Yet Macdonald's critics and apologists alike have reason to appreciate the fair-minded profile Ken Brown has painted of Macdonald as a generous private citizen and lawyer in his short book *Macdonald and Mrs. Hall: Brought Together by Beavermead Farm, Peterborough*.

The story is rife with pathos. In 1859, Elizabeth Hall, a recently widowed thirty-five-year-old mother of four young children, was overwhelmed by her late husband's debts and at risk of losing her Peterborough-area home, Beavermead Farm, to his creditors. She desperately needed, in Brown's words, a "proverbial 'white knight'," who appeared in the person of John A. Macdonald, at the time the United Province of Canada's leading politician and future champion of

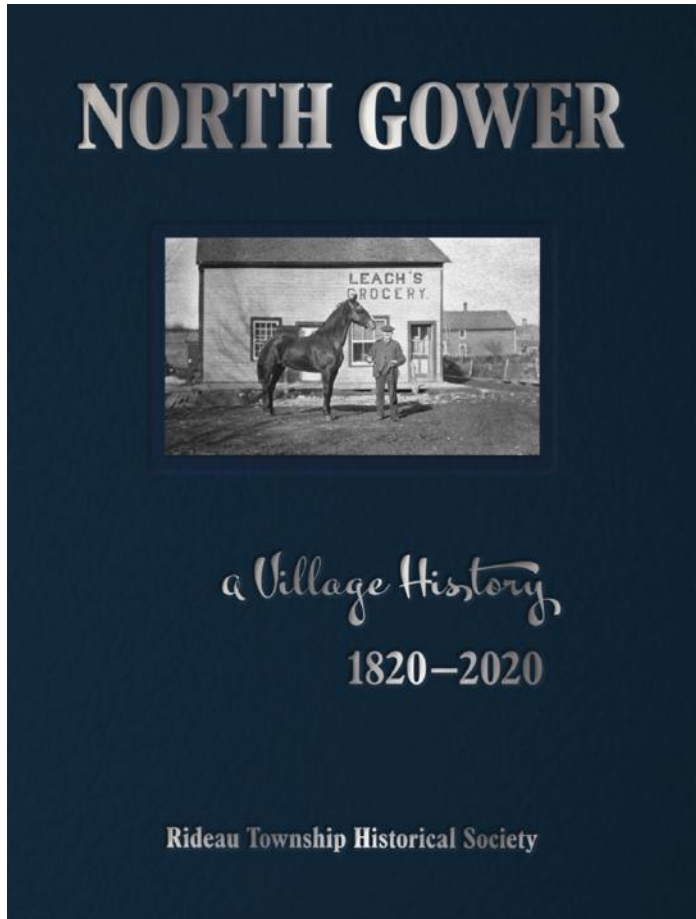
Canadian confederation. Despite his many pressing public obligations, Macdonald carved out time to oversee the Beavermead property's development, a trusteeship that eventually dragged on for a dozen years, thereby saving Elizabeth from destitution.

Why did Macdonald agree to so extended a commitment, especially given his well-known propensity for neglecting his own real estate speculations? A partial explanation is Macdonald's loyalty to his close friend and Elizabeth's deceased husband, George Barker Hall, a Peterborough mill owner, politician, and county judge. Over the years, other historians have speculated whether Macdonald, whose wife Isabella had died just two months before George's passing, might also have been romantically motivated. The evidence is sparse and based in part on Elizabeth's letters to "darling John" that she signed with "love from loving Lizzie." Brown acknowledges that "a certain intrigue about the various Hall-Macdonald relationships remains," but settling the matter is not his concern. Rather, he contributes to our understanding of Macdonald in other ways. Macdonald's trusteeship of the Beavermead estate was not especially inspired – Brown points out that Macdonald lost money on some transactions – but he proved himself a devoted friend to a deceased colleague's widow and children.

In telling this story, Brown, an accountant by profession, also provides enlightening explanations of how mortgage foreclosures were handled in mid-19th century Ontario. That is no mean feat. Equally impressive, Brown's brief excursion into "a little-known and extraordinary personal relationship on the part of Canada's most prominent historical figure" is a welcome step towards restoring balance in how Sir John A. Macdonald is remembered.

North Gower: A Village History, 1820–2020

By Susan McKellar, Ruth Wright, William Tupper, Georgina Tupper, and Owen Cooke



North Gower: A Village History, 1820–2020, is a comprehensive and beautifully illustrated book published by the Rideau Township Historical Society. North Gower amalgamated with the city of Ottawa in 2001, but the book's emphasis, both chronological and thematic, is the village's development as a distinctly rural eastern Ontario community for much of its first two hundred years of existence. Whereas community histories are sometimes long on lists of people, places, and events, yet lack meaningful explanations of how and why those places existed, this book is a noteworthy exception.

Its impressively detailed chapters on, for example, North Gower's agricultural, military, educational, religious, sporting, and artistic history nicely contextualize the community within Ontario's broader history. The book carefully traces the appearance of local businesses, beginning with Stephen Blanchard's inn in 1819 and the succession of stores, manufactories, trades, services, and professions that contributed to the village's self-sufficiency in the years thereafter. The fledgling community's entrepreneurial vigor was displayed in the 1860s when thirty local farmers formed a joint stock company to operate the North Gower cheese factory. Especially instructive are profiles highlighting the predominantly Irish origins of many of North Gower's earliest settlers. These accounts are accentuated by a fine collection of photos detailing the architectural styles and occupants of some of the community's older buildings, homes, and businesses.

The book is rich with anecdotes that bring local history to life. We are told, for instance, that the first telephone switchboard to serve the community in the early 1900s was available only for emergency calls on evenings and Sundays, and the local Masonic Lodge scheduled its nighttime meetings to coincide with the full moon to help illuminate members' early-morning journeys home in their horse-drawn vehicles. In an interesting diversion from its theme of community growth, the book recalls the most destructive fires to ravage the village throughout its history, thereby emphasizing villagers' communal hardiness in response to adversity.

Fifty pages of detailed appendices round out the collection by identifying many generations of community leaders from all walks of life who shaped North Gower. The Rideau Township Historical Society, to its credit, devoted a section of the book to celebrating the spirit of voluntarism that sustained North Gower's various local heritage organizations over many years. This book is evidence that inspired writing of history can result from such sustained commitment.



Building the exhibition. Photograph from Kimberly Lulashnyk, Chair of the Newboro and Area Heritage Society.

History of Indigenous Peoples in Rideau Lakes

An Archaeological Approach

By Ted Stewart

Researcher and Historian, Newboro and Area Historical Society

The story of the Rideau Lakes begins more than 11,000 years ago, at the close of the last Ice Age. Long before canals and cottages defined the landscape, this region was home to Indigenous peoples who lived, travelled, and thrived here continuously from that time to the present day. And now, thanks to a landmark new project, it is being brought to life for the community.

This past summer, the [Newboro and Area Heritage Society](#) (NAHS) launched *History of Indigenous Peoples in Rideau Lakes: An Archaeological Approach*, a first-of-its-kind exhibition tracing the deep Indigenous history of the area. Opening on National Indigenous Peoples Day, June 21, 2025, the exhibition was accompanied by a sold-out Bannock & Beads Fundraiser and an archaeological talk by Ted Stewart, drawing enthusiastic crowds to Newboro Community Hall. Together, these events mark a turning point in how Rideau Lakes tells its story, expanding it far beyond the Loyalist settlements and canal construction that so often dominate local history.

Building the Exhibition

The foundation of the exhibition comes from the life's work of Ted Stewart, a retired archaeological technician, naturalist, artist, and Vice-Chair of the NAHS. Over the course of three decades of fieldwork in southeastern Ontario, Stewart gathered archaeological information that revealed a long and complex Indigenous presence in Rideau Lakes. His expertise, combined with his



skills as a teacher and writer, allowed him to shape these findings into a compelling narrative.

The result was a set of four interpretive panels, beautifully designed to guide visitors through the Paleo, Archaic, Woodland, and Contact periods of Indigenous history. NAHS expanded this work into an exhibition at Newboro Hall, which was open from June to August 2025.

The launch night was memorable: Newboro Hall was filled as Stewart delivered a public talk that transported his audience across millennia. As both an award-winning wildfowl artist and a meticulous researcher, Stewart spoke with authority and passion, revealing how ancient landscapes and artifacts help tell the story of Indigenous presence in the Rideau Lakes region. His talk challenged familiar settler-centric narratives, replacing them with a much deeper and more inclusive understanding of the region's roots.

Bannock & Beads: A Fundraiser and Celebration

On the eve of the exhibition opening, the hall was filled with warmth, music, and the smell of bannock baking. The Bannock & Beads Fundraiser, conceived by Maggie Stewart, originally from Kashechewan, and hosted by members of the Indigenous Beading Group, was as much a celebration of culture as it was a fundraiser for heritage initiatives.

Guests enjoyed a menu that reflected traditional knowledge and seasonal foodways: bannock, bison chili, venison chili, duck wild rice, and wild blueberry cake, accompanied by cedar tea. The menu linked the evening to generations of Indigenous cooking and gathering.

The evening began with a blessing and welcome from Mirielle Lapointe, setting the tone for the event with respect and ceremony. In the hall, the women of the beading group showcased their artistry through beaded bags, jewelry, moccasins, and other handcrafted items that reflected traditions of beauty, patience, and resilience. These works were offered for sale, with proceeds supporting the beading group.

The hall was alive with conversation, new knowledge,

and shared discovery. For many attendees, it was their first opportunity to experience Indigenous food and artistry in this way. The event sold out quickly, a testament to the community's interest in connection and cultural exchange.

Tracing the Long Story of Indigenous Presence

The exhibition itself takes visitors on a chronological journey through four key periods of Indigenous history in the Rideau Lakes region:

Paleo Period (11,500–8,000 years ago): After the glaciers receded, the Frontenac Arch, a granite ridge that remained above floodwaters, became a vital corridor for plants, animals, and the first people. Archaeologists have found rare fluted Paleo spear points that were used to hunt Ice Age caribou and seals, and are among the oldest artifacts ever discovered in the region.



Archaic Period (8,000–2,500 years ago): With growing populations came innovation. Finds in Rideau Lakes include stone points, groundstone axeheads, and copper tools, evidence of early long-distance trade networks. From functional tools like fishhooks to decorative beads

and bracelets, these artifacts reveal a society that was both practical and artistic.

Woodland Period (2,500–400 years ago): The introduction of ceramics transformed daily life. Archaeological digs near Wolfe Lake have uncovered pottery fragments from 11 pots that date back around 1,000 years. A pot from the St. Lawrence River had traces of caffeine, pointing to extensive trade networks. During this time, Anishinaabe Peoples moved seasonally across the region, while Iroquoian-speaking Peoples established farming villages that featured corn, beans, and squash, collectively known as the “Three Sisters.” Longhouses, palisades, and distinctive pottery designs marked this period of growth and settlement.

Contact Period (400 years ago to present): With the arrival of Europeans came profound upheaval. Treaties such as the Crawford Purchase (1783) and the Rideau Purchase (1822) were signed without consulting the Algonquin Peoples, whose lands were claimed under the Doctrine of Discovery. The imposition of colonial policies, including residential schools, brought lasting harm. Yet the story is not only one of loss, it is also one



Ted Stewart placing an artifact for exhibition. Photograph from Kimberly Lulashnyk, Chair of the Newboro and Area Heritage Society.

of resilience, as Indigenous peoples continue to shape and sustain their cultures in Rideau Lakes today.

Why it Matters

The exhibition is more than an account of artifacts and dates. It is a reminder that Indigenous presence here is not a footnote to settler history, but the very foundation of it. Too often, stories of the Rideau Lakes begin with the canal or the Loyalists. This exhibition re-centres the narrative, offering a longer, deeper timeline that acknowledges both continuity and change.

For the NAHS, the project also serves as a step toward truth and reconciliation. By highlighting Indigenous histories through archaeology, the Society hopes to foster recognition, respect, and ongoing dialogue. The overwhelming response to the fundraiser and the exhibition’s opening suggests that the community is ready to engage with this fuller, more honest telling of its past.

Looking Ahead

Beyond these inaugural events, the NAHS sees the exhibition as only the beginning. By preserving and sharing Indigenous histories, the NAHS hopes to foster ongoing partnerships with Indigenous groups, artists, and educators. The panels are designed to travel, and the vision is to see them displayed in community halls, schools, and institutions across the region, anywhere people are eager to learn more about the deep and enduring history of Indigenous peoples in Rideau Lakes.

Conclusion

The History of Indigenous Peoples in Rideau Lakes: An Archaeological Approach is more than an exhibition; it is an opportunity to learn and explore. It connects the earliest archaeological evidence, such as Paleo points, with the living cultural traditions seen today in beading, food, and storytelling. The exhibition highlights the continuous presence of Indigenous peoples in Rideau Lakes while encouraging all community members to reflect on and acknowledge this history.

Through the Bannock & Beads Fundraiser, Ted Stewart’s talk, and the summer-long display, the Newboro and Area

Heritage Society has shown how heritage projects can preserve the past while also building greater understanding in the present. The events made clear that the history of Rideau Lakes is far older and more complex than many had realized, and that Indigenous cultures remains a vital part of the community today.

For More Information

The Newboro and Area Heritage Society extends its sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of *The History of Indigenous Peoples in Rideau Lakes: An Archaeological Approach*, from Knowledge Holders and community partners to the many volunteers who helped bring the project to life.

For more information about the exhibition or if you are interested in hosting the travelling panels in your community hall, school, or institution, please contact us through our [website](#).

“Heritage Passport” continued from p.6

7

Merrickville Turbine

Merrickville, Ontario



Photo courtesy of the Friends of the Merrickville Turbine

This hydroelectric turbine generator provided electricity to the village of Merrickville and nearby factories from 1915 to 1993. In 2011, the [Friends of the Merrickville Turbine](#) incorporated with the OHS to prevent the turbine from being scrapped; the Friends restored the turbine for public display. You can visit the turbine any time this season.

105 Mill St, Merrickville, ON K0G 1N0

Upcoming Heritage & Culture Events

Rideau Lakes Studio Tour
June 27–28, 2026

Canada Day Events
July 1

Heritage Fair
July 4–5, 2026

Elgin Days
July 11, 2026

Delta Fair
July 25–26, 2026

Lombardy Fair
July 31–August 2, 2026

Heritage Event
August 15–16, 2026

Delta Harvest Festival
September 26



OHS Members/Affiliates in the Region

[Delta Mill Society](#)

[Elgin & Area Heritage Society](#)

[Friends of the Merrickville Turbine](#)

[Friends of the Rideau](#)

[Kingston Historical Society](#)

[Merrickville & District History Society](#)

[Newboro and Area Heritage Society](#)

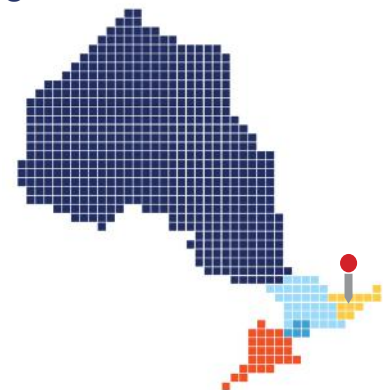
[Portland on the Rideau Historical Society](#)

[Rideau Lakes Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee/Township of Rideau Lakes](#)

[Rideau Township Historical Society](#)

Discover Rideau Lakes

For more information on upcoming events, walking tours, driving tours, and a host of other heritage resources and databases, visit the [Rideau Lakes Culture and Heritage page](#).





OHS Affiliated Society, Glengarry Fencibles Trust (GFT) owns and operates the historic Bishop's House (pictured above) on the grounds of St. Raphael's National Historic Site of Canada. Since taking possession of the building in 2016, GFT has worked to restore and maintain this stunning building for the public's benefit.

200th Anniversary of The College of Iona St Raphael's, Ontario

By Brenda Baxter
President, Glengarry Fencibles Trust

Upper Canada's first college officially opened at St Raphael's, Glengarry County, in 1826. Known as the College of Iona, classes began on a part-time basis in 1817. The decision to establish the College was driven by missionary priest Alexander Macdonell (1762–1840). He had arrived in St Raphael's (1804) after serving as military chaplain of the Glengarry Fencibles in Europe. He again served with the Fencibles during the War of 1812. Macdonell had developed a strong interest in education for all, Catholic and non-Catholic.

The College was opened at a time when the number of immigrants was growing at a significant rate in

Upper Canada. He was convinced that a Canada-centred education was needed to safeguard against the infiltration of republican sentiments from the US. He was also mandated by his superior, the Bishop of Québec, to educate and prepare priests and teachers to serve the missions of Upper Canada.

Macdonell established the College within his large Georgian house and created additional space by constructing a log building nearby. Lord Bathurst allowed him to hire three clergymen and three school masters who would be paid by government, though Macdonell struggled until 1826 to obtain these funds for their salaries.

The monies he received from Protestant gentlemen for a general education for their sons helped cover the cost of those studying for the priesthood who were too poor to pay. Proper books were not easy to find. Macdonell

relied on British aristocrat Thomas Weld for assistance in obtaining books from Great Britain. His wish list of books for the College included compendiums of ancient and modern history, the Greek New Testament, and Rollins Ancient and Roman histories, etc.

When he became the first Bishop of Kingston Diocese in 1826 (covering most of Ontario), a formal opening of the College of Iona took place in St Raphael's. At least fourteen from the College were ordained for service in the church of Upper Canada and several more for service in Québec. These priests went on to establish schools and churches throughout Ontario. John Sandfield Macdonald, who was born and raised nearby, completed his elementary education at St Raphael's (available for boys and girls) before leaving to study law. Macdonald served in all eight parliaments of the United Canadas (1841–1867) and became the first Premier of Ontario. His brother Donald attended the College and served as a cabinet minister in the Parliament of Canada.

When Macdonell was named the Bishop of Kingston Diocese, it was inevitable that Kingston would become the new administrative centre for the Catholic Church in Upper Canada. As a result, the College ceased operations in St Raphael's in 1836 and a new institution, Regiopolis College, was opened in Kingston in 1837 to continue this work. Today, the library collection of the College of Iona is held by Queen's University Library.

Upcoming Celebration

With support from Canadian Heritage — Patrimoine canadien, there will be a 200th anniversary celebration of the formal opening of The College of Iona September 18 and 19, 2026, at the Bishop's House at St Raphael's National Historic Site. We look forward to welcoming you in September!

The Bishop's House Restoration

This 1808 landmark in Glengarry County, within the National Historic Site of St. Raphael's, was almost demolished in 2015. Since taking ownership of the building, the GFT has worked to restore the historic structure. The goal is to adapt the building for reuse as a cultural and conference centre.

Since 2016, GFT has focused on bringing the landscape back into perspective and securing the envelope of the building. In 2020, two walls on the



The Bishop's House (boarded up) in April 2015.

rear of the building were restored. The 1826 drystone retaining wall, which arches along a knoll in front was fully restored by instructors, volunteers, and students with Drystone Canada from 2017–22. The exterior of the building and the two-acre grounds have seen other significant improvements. Besides the roof, which was replaced in 2017, the stately veranda and Juliet balcony were restored, the heritage metal trim repainted, and the mansard tiles repaired. In addition, the interior of the main level of the house (1808) has been rehabilitated and restored, and is open to the public.



Volunteers assembled in 2020 to help restore the stone wall.

Glengarry Fencibles Trust owns the Bishop's House and operates as a registered charity, incorporated through affiliation with OHS. Visit bishophouse.ca for more information.

OHS AWARD WINNERS 2025/26

In 1967, The Ontario Historical Society established an awards program to honour individuals and organizations who have contributed significantly to the preservation and promotion of Ontario's heritage. [The OHS Awards program](#) is intended both to acknowledge the work of outstanding individuals and organizations, and to raise public awareness of Ontario's history and the people who work to preserve and interpret it.

In 2025, the OHS launched a redesigned Awards program, featuring three awards for authors, three awards for outstanding achievement, and the Alison Prentice Award for Canadian Women's History, which carries a cash prize of \$1,000.



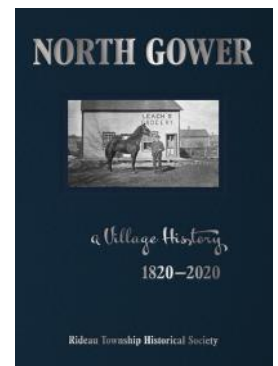
Our 2025 OHS Award Recipients are pictured here at the Awards Ceremony held on December 6 at the historic John McKenzie House in Willowdale. (L to R): Dr. Melissa N. Shaw, Dr. Steven High, Dr. Cody Groat, Isaac Bender, Debbie Johnston, Sidney Williams, Susan McKellar, Pancheta Barnett, Ruth Wright, Dr. Rebecca Beusaert, and Owen Cooke.

BEST LOCAL HISTORY BOOK AWARD

Susan McKellar, Ruth Wright, William Tupper, Georgina Tupper, and Owen Cooke

[*North Gower: A Village History, 1820–2020*](#)

The committee of co-writers of *North Gower* has woven stories submitted by local families and institutions with historical archival records into a well-organized and compelling text. This substantial and well-designed book is accessible and useful to everyone with an interest in the history of the small communities of the National Capital Region that were amalgamated into the City of Ottawa in 2001. The book features numerous colour, and black-and-white photographs, and drawings that enhance the story told within. The extensive appendices are a thorough compendium of maps showing the development of the village and a “who’s who” throughout the history of this evolving community. The Ontario Historical Society congratulates the authors and the Rideau Township Historical Society.



RUNNERS UP

Ian McKechnie & Tom Mohr, *Reflections on Old Victoria County: In Tribute to R.B. Fleming*

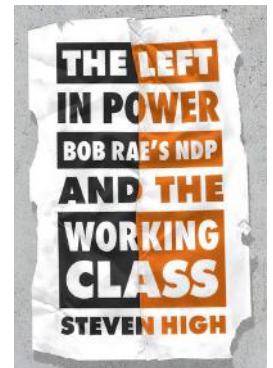
Ann Love and Sharon Bentley, *The History of King Township: A Community Shaped by the Land*

BEST SCHOLARLY BOOK AWARD

Dr. Steven High

[The Left in Power: Bob Rae's NDP and the Working Class](#)

Based on impressive archival research in addition to High's interviews with many of the key shapers of the Ontario NDP's economic policy in the 1980s and early 1990s, *The Left in Power* frankly assesses what the Rae government got right – and wrong – in its response to the deindustrialization of Ontario's economy amidst an economic recession and the impact of free trade on manufacturing industries in Ontario. High's personal connection to the topic (he was an activist in the Ontario NDP's youth wing in the 1980s who, like many New Democrats, became disillusioned with the party during the Rae years) only adds to the book's urgency. Now Canada's foremost oral historian, High's thorough and riveting account explains how leading figures in the Ontario NDP and the Rae government adopted a "progressive competitive model" in response to free trade and deindustrialization during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Combining sophisticated analysis with engaging storytelling, *The Left in Power* will appeal to students and scholars of Ontario history, Canadian political history, and those interested in the global social democratic left. Congratulations to Dr. Steven High.



RUNNERS UP

Dr. Daniel Macfarlane, *The Lives of Lake Ontario: An Environmental History*

Dr. Ian Radforth, *Deadly Swindle: An 1890 Murder in Backwoods Ontario that Grippped the World*

BEST ARTICLE OR PAPER AWARD

Dr. Melissa N. Shaw

[“Who Used to Run the UNIA Hall”: Black Canadian Women’s Leadership of Toronto Division 21, 1919–1939.”](#)

The Ontario Historical Society is pleased to present the 2025 Best Article or Paper Award, which recognizes an outstanding article, cognate paper, or thesis on the history of Ontario, to Dr. Melissa N. Shaw, for her article: “Who Used to Run the UNIA Hall”: Black Canadian Women’s Leadership of Toronto Division 21, 1919–1939.” Published in the Spring 2024 issue of *The Journal of African American History*, Shaw’s article highlights the leadership of Black Canadian women in Toronto’s Division 21 UNIA Hall, showcasing their vital role in racial pride and community building. Skillfully written and meticulously researched, it draws on primary and archival materials, as well as oral histories, to demonstrate the intraracial sociopolitical work of Black women in Toronto who maintained their division’s fiscal health, fostered racial solidarity, and built a collective identity among Black youth. Dr. Shaw’s article is an excellent piece of scholarship that enhances our awareness of Ontario’s diverse history. The Awards Committee congratulates Dr. Melissa N. Shaw, winner of the 2025 OHS Best Article or Paper Award.



RUSSELL K. COOPER HISTORICAL PROGRAMMING AWARD

The Potter's Field Project

The Potter's Field Project represents an exceptional example of public history, collaborative research, and community remembrance. Led by Western University Assistant Professor of History and Indigenous Studies, Dr. Cody Groat, in partnership with the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery Board, the Town of Ingersoll, the Township of Zorra, and the Oxford County Library, this initiative has transformed a long-neglected section of the cemetery into a powerful site of education, commemoration, and community connection. Through student research, volunteer contributions, and meaningful engagement with descendants and local residents, the project has restored dignity to those who had largely been forgotten. This project has illuminated the experiences of marginalized residents who faced discrimination, and created new pathways for understanding the structural roots of poverty and exclusion in Ontario's past. With its creativity, leadership, and profound community impact, the Potter's Field Project exemplifies the spirit and purpose of the Russell K. Cooper Award. The Awards Committee congratulates the Potter's Field Project team for their extraordinary achievement. The Committee recognizes the contributions of everyone involved in this project, including: Dr. Cody Groat, Debbie Johnston, Rebecca Small, Emily Kirk, Isaac Bender, Edward Eastaugh, Carolyn French, Cathy Mott, Brian Petrie, Rick Eus, Kevin Stewart, Randy Porchak, and Vicki Brenner.



DOROTHY DUNCAN AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP IN HERITAGE

Sidney Williams

This year, the Ontario Historical Society is proud to present the Dorothy Duncan Award for Leadership in Heritage to Sidney Williams, Assistant Curator at the Beachville District Museum, in recognition of her exceptional leadership, innovation, and commitment to public history education and community heritage programming in Ontario. Williams is a bold and inspiring heritage professional who has transformed the way her community experiences local history. Through her vision and dedication, she has created highly engaging programs rooted in the cultural traditions, agricultural heritage, and industrial history of Oxford County. Her "Hands-On Heritage" initiative—including historic baseball-making, Victorian quilting, and butter-churning experiences—offers immersive, intergenerational learning opportunities that make history personal, tangible, and meaningful. These programs have garnered regional and national attention, strengthening heritage tourism and showcasing the power of small museums to deliver innovative, high-impact experiences. Sidney Williams exemplifies the spirit of this award through her leadership, creativity, community-first approach, and tireless advocacy for rural and regional histories. Her work has reinvigorated public interest in local heritage and inspired others across the cultural sector to think boldly about what community museums can achieve. The Awards Committee congratulates Sidney Williams on this well-deserved honour and extends sincere appreciation for her exceptional contributions to Ontario's heritage and to the future of public history in our province.



HONOURABLE MENTION

Dr. Robert Roden, who has exhibited ongoing dedication toward researching, preserving, and celebrating the local history of Etobicoke and Toronto. Thank you, Dr. Roden, for all of your many contributions.

OHS PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Pancheta Barnett

This year, the Ontario Historical Society is proud to present the OHS President's Award to Pancheta Barnett, President of the East York Historical Society, in recognition of her exceptional leadership, volunteerism, and profound contributions to preserving and celebrating the history of Ontario. The President's Award recognizes an outstanding contribution to the preservation or promotion of Ontario's history. Barnett has dedicated herself to community-centred heritage preservation while championing equity, historical accuracy, and broad public engagement. Under her leadership, the East York Historical Society has reached new heights through dynamic programming, collaboration with public institutions, and the active preservation and promotion of local Black history. Her work has included spearheading initiatives to honour historically overlooked figures, such as the naming of Henry Box Brown Lane and Luella Price Lane, and advocating for heritage recognition through plaques, educational talks, and accessible public history resources. As a writer and editor, her ongoing publication of *East York Inklings* continues to inspire civic pride, build historical awareness, and connect people within the community. Ms. Barnett's commitment extends deeply into community service. She has personally supported historical education for youth through school presentations, collaborated with libraries and partners to deliver inclusive learning programs, and fostered multigenerational outreach by delivering newsletters to seniors and maintaining direct contact with long-standing Society members. Her collaborative leadership has sparked renewed interest in East York's past while uplifting voices historically under-represented in Ontario's heritage landscape. The Awards Committee congratulates Pancheta Barnett on this well-deserved honour and thanks her for her enduring commitment to preserving, sharing, and enriching Ontario's history.



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Waterdown Museum of Hope: This grassroots initiative presents captivating, student-researched stories that offer rich and educational experiences. The Committee thanks the Waterdown Museum of Hope for demonstrating the impact of grassroots historical organizations in Ontario.

ALISON PRENTICE AWARD FOR CANADIAN WOMEN'S HISTORY

Dr. Rebecca Beauseart

Pursuing Play: Women's Leisure in Small-Town Ontario, 1870–1914

The Ontario Historical Society's Alison Prentice Award for Canadian Women's History recognizes an early career historian for an outstanding project bringing greater awareness to women's history in Ontario. The OHS is pleased to present the 2025 Alison Prentice Award to Dr. Rebecca Beauseart, for her book, *Pursuing Play: Women's Leisure in Small-Town Ontario, 1870–1914*, published by University of Manitoba Press. Beauseart explores the leisure activities of women in rural Canada within a period of tremendous social, cultural, economic, political, and religious change through the three small-town case studies of Elora, Dresden, and Tillsonburg. She convincingly argues that women in these areas increasingly exhibited agency and autonomy in their choices of leisure activities, which enlarged their social networks, strengthened long-standing ties of kinship and friendship, and created more opportunities for community involvement. In so doing, Beauseart challenges the prevailing narrative by revealing how trends in leisure and social change in small-town Canada actually mirrored those at the national level within a few decades of Confederation.



OHS UPDATES

Updates from OHS members and Affiliated Societies



Moore Museum: St. Clair Township Fire Department was on site during Moore Museum's 50th Anniversary celebration. Members of the fire department showcased historic firefighting equipment and talked about their real-life experiences in the Museum's replica firehall. Photograph by William Moran.



Lake of the Woods Historical Society: Last summer, the Lake of Woods Historical Society hosted the Keewatin Bike Parade through the neighbourhood and around the Mather-Walls House. Photograph courtesy of the Lake of the Woods Historical Society.



Hamilton Branch United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada (UELAC): The plaquing of cemeteries that have a first-generation loyalist buried on the property has been a project by the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada for more than ten years. The sign indicates "United Empire Loyalists Burial Site". On June 1, Clement Lucas Jr. UEL, a first-generation loyalist, was honoured with a plaque at Mount Vernon Pioneer Cemetery in Burlington. The descendant of Clement Lucas, Shirley Gray, attended with her grandson, Ryan Milbury. Others attending were Ward Five Councillor, Paul Sharman, Appleby United Church members, the Burlington Historical Society, and members of the Hamilton Branch UELAC. Photograph from Pat Blackburn and Fred Hayward.



Leaside Heritage Preservation Society: Each Remembrance Day, we have a walk in our neighbourhood: The Walk of Remembrance. Leaside Heritage has marked the homes of each Leaside boy/man who went away to fight at war and did not return. Lawn signs are placed at the address where the soldier lived and left home from. Photograph from Ann Brown.

CELEBRATING *our* COMMUNITY

Every member and donor strengthens the Ontario Historical Society's mission to preserve and share Ontario's rich history.

Thank you for being part of our growing community!

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