

Heritage Update



Heritage NL

News and Notes on Heritage NL's Built Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Programs
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Conference Tips and Tricks

By Victoria Mathews

Last year's Heritage Conference was held on October 17th - 18th and was a great success. This was my first time working on such a significant event, and while I had a wonderful time, it was definitely a learning opportunity. Based on attendee feedback, coworker testimony, and my own experience, here are a few tips and tricks for anyone facing the daunting task of conference planning.



Sponsorship

Securing funding and sponsorship is a persistent challenge for heritage organizations, and conferences are no exception. I dedicated significant time to contacting potential sponsors about tiered and donation options. I am really grateful to those who supported the event, though reaching out to potential sponsors sooner would likely have secured even more funding.

Calling or visiting sponsors in person proved more effective as it got quick responses. If possible, having more than one person on the task would be more effective. Dividing it by communication method (email and phone) or by store type (local and chain) may make it easier.

Many corporations have forms on their websites for you to fill out, such as general inquiry or sponsorship forms. Even if you do not think the company will be interested in your event, fill it out anyway. You can also call local chain locations to see what they recommend, and many locations have a set donation budget, so they may act independently of the company.

Coordinating Panels

This year's Heritage Conference relied heavily on panels, as we were discussing diversity and wanted varied perspectives on the topics. That did pose some issues throughout planning, but they were relatively easy to handle.

The two main things I would recommend are emails to each participant with important information, such as parking, suggested arrival times, and who else is on their panel. This does two main things: it ensures everything is clearly communicated, and it has the added bonus of reminding people of the event, so if participants forget or have a scheduling conflict, it is addressed before the event.

The other recommendation is to coordinate a meeting for each panel in advance. Panels can't really be scripted, but they can be discussed, such as who will moderate, potential questions, and any concerns. We did not do this for every panel at this year's conference, but the ones we did ran much more smoothly on the day.

Timing

Timing matters a lot in conferences, especially during open sharing or Q&A sessions. Assigning someone to oversee the event timing is essential to avoid confusion and delay. Having a queue for speakers to show that time is running low is another good method. This year's conference just used a phone timer, but other queues could include the infamous duck or coloured cards.

If you have any feedback for the event, the Google Form is still open and taking responses. If you're interested in filling it out or have general commentary, please reach out to me at Victoria@heritagenl.ca. We look forward to seeing you all at the conference next year at Heart's Content!

Youth Heritage Forum 2026

By Victoria Mathews

The Youth Heritage Forum will be on March 21st, 2026, at the Johnson Geo Center. We've decided on the topics that mattered to youth based on feedback from 2025's event and the surveys sent out in December. We'll be having two educational sessions, one on Genealogy and one on How to Get Involved in Heritage. We'll have multiple speakers from different organizations share their processes and answer questions.

A consistent piece of feedback we hear from young people is that they are looking for more ways to network and connect with people in the field. Alongside the ability to talk to peers at the event, mentors from various sectors will also be in attendance for the youth to talk to. Topics include volunteering, conservation, exhibit design, employment and more. We're planning to set up a rotation with attendees switching topic tables every few minutes. Like Heritage speed-dating!

If you have any ideas you want us to consider, feel free to reach out! We want to hear from you, as this event is meant to address and support youth through the many hurdles they face when entering the heritage field.

Registration will open up on February 2nd, 2026, so make sure to keep your eyes open! There may also be some merchandise available, but you didn't hear that from me. The full itinerary will be released soon after registration, and we'll continue posting updates on our social media and blog.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Torbay Scanning Party February 7th

By *Victoria Mathews*



Heritage NL is working with Torbay History House and the town of Torbay to host a Women's Labour in Newfoundland and Labrador Scanning Party.

Whether it be paid or unpaid, professional or domestic, women have a long history of labour in Newfoundland and Labrador. Many factors, such as the First and Second World Wars, women's suffrage, and labour union movements, have radically changed women's relationship with labour. As we just passed the 100th anniversary of the beginning of women's suffrage in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are

working to better document that relationship. We will be hosting scanning parties with various communities to collect primary sources, such as photographs, letters, maps, journal entries, postcards, training manuals, certificates and diplomas.

The questions we hope to answer are: where and how did the women in your family history or yourself work? What jobs (paid or unpaid) did women take on? Where in your town/ community did they work? What skills/ knowledge do women hold? Where did this knowledge come from? What leadership positions did women hold in your town/ community?

The scanning party will take place on February 7th, 2026, from 1-3 pm at the Torbay History House. It's free to attend, and scanned materials will be uploaded to the MUN Digital Archive Initiative (DAI) and provided to the community.

We hope to see you there!

More Than Just the ‘Old Post Office’

By *Tienne Johnson*

The small, rundown building across from Sherry’s Seaside Store in Hant’s Harbour sits empty today, but the ‘Old Post Office’ was once a hub for the community, bringing news from family, friends, and global affairs. It was built between 1929 and 1930 and replaced the previous office burned down in May 1929.

This new office was simple; a one-room building split into a lobby with two wickets and a workspace for the postmistress or master. On the backside of the building there was a small earth closet—the bathroom—and a coal room for the stove. Unfortunately, after decades of sitting empty, it has fallen into disrepair, but it certainly hasn’t been forgotten by residents.

Photo, right: The Hant’s Harbour Old Post Office in July 2025.

During a visit in July, flowers were hung on the fence in front of the building, put there by Sherry, who runs the store across the road. A scale-model of the old post office can be found in the museum, with its bright yellow walls and green trim showing how lively the building once was. The most dedicated individuals to the old post office are the Willow Tree Heritage Society (WTHS), who purchased the building in the hopes of preserving its decades of history and acknowledging those who served their community with dedication. Many of the stories about the office come from the last postmaster, Clarence Snook, who worked in the old post office from 1944 until 1955.



Photo, left: Scale Model Post Office at the Willow Tree Museum.

The first postmistress was Clara Janes, who trained Snook’s predecessor, Melina Critch. According to Snook, Critch was “almost a Florence Nightingale”;

In those days everybody were letter-writers, and if there was somebody who couldn’t express themselves very well in a letter, they’d go to Melina, Miss Melina and ask her to write the letter. And she spent hours and weeks I suppose that she never got paid for, nor did she charge for. She was just an angel;

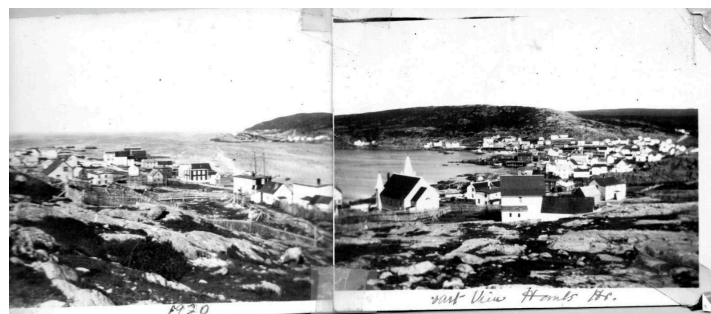


that’s the way to put it.

Melina retired in 1944 due to her health, and Snook took over, but his responsibilities went beyond those of the post. As World War Two was still ongoing, he helped in spotting and reporting aircraft. Using the specifications given to him by the Air Force, he would identify types of planes based on the tail and wings, record the direction the plane was headed, and call the report in through the telegraph line. The call would go from Hant's Harbour, to Whitbourne, to St. John's, where an operator would forward the information to the Royal Canadian Air Force. After the war, he was awarded a badge and certificate in appreciation for his service.

Photo, right: Clarence Snook

Without access to telephone or radio, mail and telegraph were the main forms of communication—and entertainment. Snook recalled how news came through telegraphs, which Critch and he would transcribe from Morse and have available for the community to read. For personal telegrams, Critch and Snook transcribed the messages and hand-delivered them to recipients, and without a vehicle, they would walk messages to residents around the harbour.



Hant's Harbour circa 1920.

Mail would be brought in by horse and buggy or sleigh, and later by truck, with mailbags “stuffed” with catalogues and magazines like Sears-Robuck and the Family Herald; and according to Snook, “it was entertainment for the community, because most people they had no course of reading or listening to the radio.” It's clear why Snook described the Old Post Office as “the nucleus” of the community: it was the center for news, communication, and entertainment.

Today, the community is curious about the future of the small building; whether it's possible to preserve it in some way or if it's beyond repair, but even as decades have passed, it is remembered as an integral part of Hant's Harbour's heritage.

2025 Heritage Plaques

By Juliet Lanphear

Heritage NL is excited to announce the unveiling of numerous heritage plaques in 2025.

New plaques were presented to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (the Kirk), the British Bank of North America Building and Sunnyside Lodge in St. John's, the Surgeon Cove Head Light Station, St. Peter's Anglican Church and Hodge Brothers Premises in Twillingate, the Butler Property in Cupids, Sunny Cottage in Harbour Breton, the Aitken Property in Deer Lake, and the Our Lady of Mercy Museum in Port au Port West. We are excited to continue our plaquing program into 2026 and celebrate our registered heritage structures.



Photo: New Interpretative Plaque for the British Bank of North America Building in St. John's (now known as the Anna Templeton Centre), presented during Doors Open

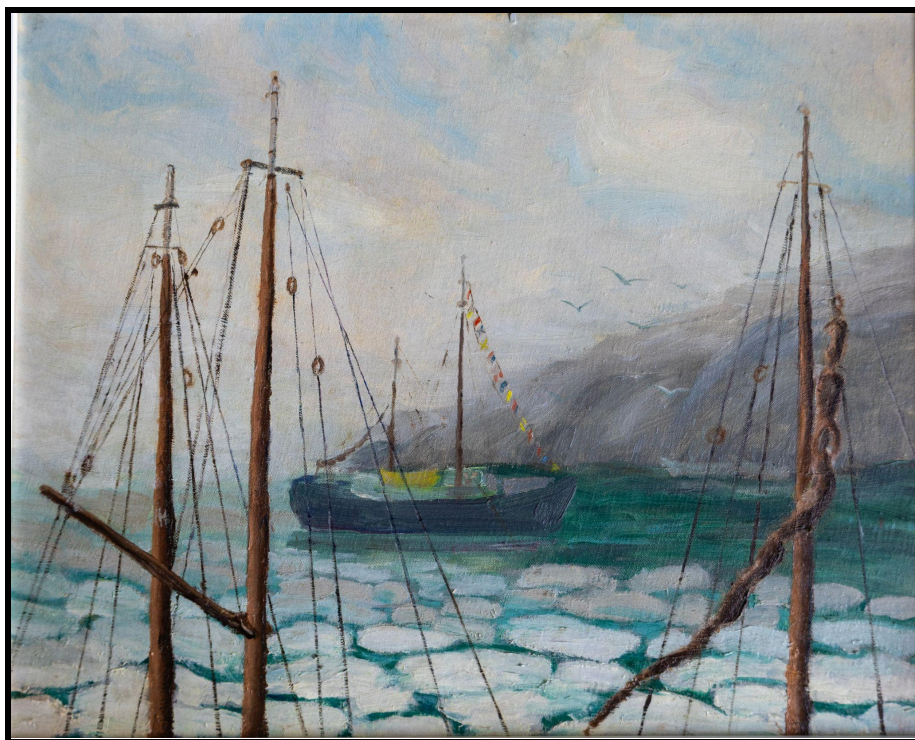
Commemorating Louise Saunders

By Katherine Morton

Louise Saunders was commemorated as the first female lawyer to be called to the bar and later was bestowed the honor of being named Queen's Counsel (QC) in Newfoundland and Labrador. Saunders was a prolific lawyer, reader, and student of the law. Originally from Greenspond, Saunders completed her education and began her working life in St. John's. Following her education, she became employed by Sir Richard Squires in his law practice as a legal secretary. She later worked as a secretary as Squires was Prime Minister of Newfoundland and later campaigned for his wife, Lady Helena Squires.

Saunders was also deeply involved in women's organizations in St. John's such as acting as a founding member of what became the YWCA locally. She was also a painter, with her paintings appearing in private collections and the Arts and Letters Show in St. John's. Alongside her impressive legal career and a keen interest in provincial politics, Saunders was well known for her painting. As a component of her commemoration, the Greenspond Historical Society was presented with a reproduction of one of Saunders' paintings, depicting a nautical scene.

The painting, pictured below, is held by the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador in their permanent collection. Saunders is commemorated for her trailblazing contributions to women’s political, legal, and social life in Newfoundland and Labrador.



Basic Folklore and Oral History Interviewing Course

When: 7-9pm Monday evenings,
February 9th-March 2nd

Where: Heritage NL office,
1 Springdale Street, St. John’s, NL
Workshop fee: \$100

(preregistration required; see [EventBrite](#) for details)



Basic Folklore and Oral History Interviewing Course

By Terra Barrett

Join Heritage NL for this four-week course to learn all you need to know to get started on your oral history projects!

This course is offered as a WHAM! partnership and is considered a core course for MANL's [Museum Studies Certificate Program](#), but you do not need to be enrolled in the program to participate in the workshop.

Calling all budding folklorists and armchair historians! This workshop is open to anyone with an interest in local history, culture and folklore, and who wishes to learn more about safeguarding our cultural heritage through the medium of oral histories.

The course will give a background on conducting research interviews in the field. It will provide an overview of the methodology and explore the practical matters of creating, designing, and executing effective oral history research projects, project planning, interview questions, ethical issues, and recording equipment.

Over the four week course, participants will conduct an interview, prepare archival metadata, and work collaboratively to create a finished oral history project. Participants will need to bring their own laptop/tablet, all other materials provided. If you have your own digital recording device (tablet, iPhone, mp3 recorder, etc) you are encouraged to bring it, but it is not required.

The workshop will be taught by folklorist Terra Barrett, Intangible Cultural Heritage Program Planner for Heritage NL. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Folklore and a Master of Arts in Public Folklore from Memorial University. Terra sits on several boards including the Mummings Festival, and has experience working with Memorial University's Folklore and Language Archives, Them Days, and The Rooms.

[Click here to register!](#)

Monday Nights, 7pm-9pm

February 9th-March 2nd, 2026

Workshop fee: \$100 (preregistration required, limited to 8 participants)

Location: Newman Building, 1 Springdale Street, St. John's

(This is office space which is unfortunately located on the second floor of the building so it is not fully accessible. We will be offering a digital version of the course in the future so stay tuned.)

For more information, contact Terra Barrett at 709-739-1892 x2, or email terra@heritagenl.ca



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