

# The Fire Mark

The Newsletter of the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum

PORT HOPE, ONTARIO, CANADA • SEPTEMBER 2014

## Welcome to our very first completely digital newsletter!

As mentioned over the past few editions of The Fire Mark, we now are completely digital — no printed copies are being produced. We have made a huge effort to obtain every member's email address with permission to email and as a result our digitized newsletter will save us approximately \$600 per year — money we can use for other things! And what's more, nobody will have the job of folding letters, stuffing envelopes, printing labels and applying postage — not to mention the trek to the post office. Sorry Canada Post but we've joined the 21st century!

An added benefit is that we are now not limited to two pages — we can have as many pages as we have information to fill. And what's more: now there are live links in our text to further information on points discussed.

We hope you will like these developments and enjoy receiving our newsletter via your email.

## Summer at the Fire Museum

Although it hasn't been the hottest of summers, the Museum continues to be a "hot" attraction! We've had visitors from all over Canada, and the world, come to see the new displays and exhibits launched this past Spring! We continue to add new pins to our world map that show where our guests originate. Recently, we've met visitors from Switzerland, Ireland, Scotland, Norway and Peru!

It's been a busy summer for board members and volunteers alike — we



Above: An overview of just one section of the Museum's main display area. The newest display, Canada's WWII Overseas Fire Fighting Battalion is at centre right. Below: Summer student, Kate Lawler, enters data using our new cataloging workstation purchased with funds raised at our Red Door Party events this year.



continue to attend various events in the area with our 30th Anniversary Raffle Truck — a 1984 GMC Short Bed Pickup, and tickets are selling well. We've had the chance to show it off to very positive reviews at car shows, cruise nights and other events and we'll

continue this throughout the season. The draw will be held on New Year's Day. Tickets can be purchased at the Museum or ordered by [clicking here](#).

We've had the pleasure of two outstanding summer students helping us out — Maddy Shaw-Rimmington and Kate Lawler. Both hires were made possible via a CSJ government grant which paid their salaries.

Madeleine was a charming guest host who was able to greet and converse with our French-speaking visitors in either official language. This was a great advantage to us as we get many, many visitors from Quebec.

Kate, a computer wizard, has been

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helping us with the re-cataloguing of our Museum collection using our newly acquired “professional” museum cataloguing software and our all-new collections management workstation in our upper office. The software and hardware were purchased with funds raised at this year’s very successful “Red Door” fundraising party series. We are greatly appreciative of the hosts who held these events on our behalf, and of course, the many generous people who attended them. We look forward to our next Red Door Party series next February. And speaking of fundraiser, many thanks to Peggy Bennett, of Port Hope, who hosted what was probably our most successful fundraiser ever in her beautiful garden in June! It was a fabulous afternoon with over 50 very generous attendees!

Recently, CFFM volunteer (volunteer of the Year 2013), Al MacKenzie organized what will be the first of many, “Boot Sales” on the CFFM lawn. Not a fundraiser, but a chance to get people down to the Museum for a bit of bargaining and exchanging fun. Thanks Al!

Our volunteer mechanic, Ray Easby, continues to work on our vintage fleet, having solved some overheating and exhaust problems with our LaFrance JOX Ariel Ladder and is currently looking into engine problems with the International Ladder Carrier. Great to have a pro like Ray working with us.

A new ventilation system has recently been installed at the Museum to keep fresh air circulating. This system, which was installed at no cost to CFFM, will help keep display areas cooler as we are not air conditioned. We haven’t really put it to the test as stated earlier, it hasn’t been all that hot this summer. :(

### We keep asking:

If you have three hours a week to donate to CFFM, we could really use your help! Call Marielle Lambert at the museum, 905.885.8985 to volunteer, [or click here.](#)



Above: All but two of these fire buckets on display at the Pump House Steam Museum in Kingston are on loan from CFFM. Can you guess which ones are ours?

### CFFM on loan!

We have made a great contact with the [Pump House Steam Museum](#) in Kingston, Ontario. Their Curator, Gordon Robinson, visited us early this year in preparation for their current special exhibit, “Ashes to Innovation: Fighting Fires in Kingston”. Gordon was looking for items to borrow from CFFM and sure enough, we were able to provide him with a selection of vintage fire buckets from our collection. These are now on display until November 29th at the Pump House. It’s a great display in a very interesting old building. It’s very innovative and hands-on, well worth a visit to Kingston!

### Board Chair stepping down

After a three year stint as CFFM Board Chair, Ken Burgin, is passing the baton to current Vice Chair, Will Lambert, who is an actual Fire Fighter! Will has served the CFFM Board for over four years and has tirelessly worked on the many projects undertaken in that time. It is unanimously agreed that he will make an outstanding Board Chair.

Says Ken, “I originally offered to take the position of Chair for two months until a replacement for former Chair, Roger Carr, could be found. Little did I know then that I’d be serving the full three year term! I must say, that for the most part,

*I have enjoyed my position as Chair, even through some very difficult times. All-in-all, I think the past three years have been three of the most exciting and progressive in CFFM history — not because I was Chair, but because we’ve had the benefits of a very hard working and involved board and we’ve attracted some extremely hard*

*working volunteers!*

*We’ve gone over every aspect of CFFM and have been able to refurbish and update the facility and displays; inaugurate new systems; raise CFFM profile and enlist far more public respect and support than CFFM has ever had before. People are beginning to see the real potential of this museum.”*

Although Ken will not continue to serve on the board, due to a bylaw which limits the length of time board members may serve, he will continue to be actively involved with CFFM as a volunteer.

We thank Ken for his service and exceptional leadership.



### Featured Volunteer:

Margaret Lothian has been with us for a few seasons now. Margaret is on hand to greet visitors and answer questions every Friday morning at the Museum. If you look in our souvenir cabinet and

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see the skillfully designed, humorous scenes painted on flat stones of various sizes, you are looking at some of Margaret's handiwork!

An avid reader and crafts person, Margaret, who was born in Pennsylvania, later moved to Simcoe, ON, and is now a Port Hoper who lives nearby the Museum. Margaret walks a mile every day and has actually climbed a mountain in New Hampshire!

A retired pastry chef, Margaret has also been a volunteer for [Fanshawe Pioneer Village](#) in London.

We're glad to have Margaret volunteering for us at CFFM and wish we had a dozen more just like her!

### New CFFM Board Member

We will be welcoming Brenda Johnston to the CFFM Board of Directors at this year's Annual General meeting to be held on August 28th, 2014 at 7 p.m. at the Museum.

Brenda has been a CFFM volunteer for over a year with responsibilities including brass polishing (something she loves to do!!!). A volunteer fire fighter with the Port Hope Fire Service, Brenda will serve as "Fire Service Liaison" for CFFM and the local fire services.



*The following article was submitted by Ray Canon, a newspaper columnist living in Southern Ontario.*

### Firefighting History

By Ray Canon

Firefighting may not be the oldest profession in the world, but it ranks up near the top when it comes to longevity. The world's early humans must have felt helpless when it came to facing the threat of fire.

This is not to say that there were no measures to fight fires before the golden age of the Roman Empire, but they were spasmodic. However, once the Romans showed that it could be done, and better still, how to go about doing it — there was a big rush to catch up.

The town of Port Hope is no different than any other community in wanting to keep fire damage to a minimum. In larger places, you can more affordably hire a large number of firefighters, but in small towns you must largely depend on volunteers to do the job. And that is the case in this small town where the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum is located.

Thirty years ago, a group of local firefighting paraphernalia collectors, together with the local fire chief at that time, decided to start a firefighting museum using items from their collections. This has grown over the years and today, the Museum's aspirations are to be the "national" firefighting museum as no national firefighting museum currently exists in Canada.

It needs to be said that in order to understand what firefighters do today, it may be advisable to see how they did it in the past, and how it evolved to the methods used today. It's a lot like adults showing photos of how they looked when they were children!

Fire is a universal and constant threat and the Museum is more than just a mundane display of equipment past and present. It is a tribute to fire fighters across Canada who have risked their lives in the line of duty — many of them volunteers who work alongside their professional brethren.

That the danger of fire is nothing new is shown by the fact that the Romans gave careful attention to the threat of fire by organizing their first fire brigade in the second century B.C. What we would perhaps consider as being humorous was shown by the fact that when the firefighters (or "Vigiles") arrived, they first had to negotiate with the building owners re: the cost of fighting the blaze! If no agreement was reached, the building was allowed to burn to the ground! The Romans were sensible enough to eventually realize that such an erratic system could not continue, and it was not long before the famous Emperor Nero organized a public system. This brand of Vigile patrolled the city looking for fires and, at the same time, acted as policemen.

The Vigiles may not have been able to put out Vesuvius, but their proven ability to put out fires led to recognition in other parts of Europe. The history of that continent is strewn with disasters — one French king liked the Roman system so much that he allowed the citizens of Paris to form their "burger watchers" to help prevent both fires and crime. It was not until the seventeenth century that specialized equipment like the first "fire engines" (complete with pumps) came into action. These hand-operated pumps, of course, had a very short range.

Unfortunately, most cities have had to have a very disastrous fire before

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getting around to establishing an “efficient” firefighting department. London, England went through this stage after experiencing “The Great Fire of 1666”. It went a step further when it established the first “Fire Insurance” company.

It took a while for the European firefighting methods to leap across the ocean to North America. On April 1st, 1853, Cincinnati, Ohio formed, what is believed to be, the first full-time, paid, professional firefighting department in the United States, and, at the same time, introduced the first steam pumpers. That set off the modernization program and steam “boilers” became a mainstay for seventy-five years.



Similar developments occurred in Canada. But the one area in which Canada is a world leader in firefighting is in the use of “water bombers” to fight forest fires. From a factory in North Bay, Ontario, comes the current favoured model, the “415” with turboprop Pratt and Whitney (Canada) engines. This plane is sold internationally and is flown by not only government and business concerns, but also by air forces. While our forest fire fighting display at the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum does not include an actual 415, we do have many photos!

We welcome visitors to the Museum and our many functions held yearly, and we are proud to preserve the history and artifacts of Canadian firefighting!

### From the collection:

**W**e have many hydrants at CFFM. They come in a great variety of shapes and sizes as well as many variations in colour. We are always adding more.

The one pictured below is special — It’s one of the later model, innovative, “high pressure” hydrants installed in downtown Toronto after the [Great Toronto Fire of 1904](#) which devastated a huge area west of Yonge Street below Wellington causing \$10,000,000 damage.

Following the fire, the City designed and installed a state-of-the-art high pressure system, with its own pumps, to serve the larger buildings being built in the city centre. This one’s from 1926.

These hydrants were decommissioned some years ago and the Museum is fortunate to have two examples in the collection. More information [click here](#).



The picture at upper right shows one of our oldest hydrants, among the early hydrants to be cast iron. Made by the [Kerr Engine Co.](#) in Walkerville, ON circa 1905, it was located several years ago in a private garden in Waterloo Ontario. It has been restored to its original appearance as it was rusty.



And speaking of fire hydrants, don’t forget about our very popular “Adopt a Hydrant” program. For \$150 you can adopt a hydrant and see that it is cleaned, polished and repainted in original colours. You will have a brass plaque attached with your name, or the name of a pet, engraved on it. Order forms are available on the web site, just [click here](#). to apply.



The Fire Mark is the Newsletter of the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum.  
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