

CABINET OF
CURIOSITIES



Celebrating 60 Sixty Years of Collecting

Oshawa Museum
April 18 - November 1, 2017

1450 Simcoe St. South (Lakeview Park) Oshawa
www.oshawamuseum.org



— Home to our History —



Cabinet of Curiosities

The term *cabinet of wonder* comes from the German term “wunderkammer” (literally meaning “wonder chamber”) The tradition of creating cabinets of wonder began during the Renaissance, the period of time between the 14th and 17th centuries. In England and France, these cabinet of wonder collections were called *cabinets* or *curiosity cabinets*.

The museums of today have evolved out of two basic aspects of human nature - our curiosity and our desire to collect. A building housing a collection of artefacts does not make a museum. A museum by today's standards is formed from the sum of a building housing a collection, and the work of a staff in forming, preserving and interpreting that collection. Today's modern museum stems from these cabinets of curiosity, featuring rare collections that were generally compiled by a single person for study or entertainment. These collections were displayed in multi-compartmented cabinets and vitrines which later grew into entire rooms and purchased by noblemen and royalty. Eventually these collections were institutionalized and turned into public museums. An example of this process is the cabinet of the London apothecary James Petiver (c.1663-1718) which was bought by Sir Hans Sloane and became the foundation for the British Museum.

As you view our exhibition, *Celebrating 60: Sixty Years of Collecting* you will notice that we have used this concept of “*cabinet of curiosities*” in our design of this exhibition. Please enjoy our cabinets filled with treasures from the Oshawa Museum's collection.

Byrnes, Laurel. *Cabinets of Wonder: What are They and Why Were They Created*. Biodiversity Heritage Library. 2017

Patterson, James. The Art of Wondering Blog. *Kunstkammer/Wunderkammer (Cabinet of Curiosities)*. 2016

Cover Image Designed by: Peter McKenzie
Trent University, Co-operative Program Student

CURATOR'S REMARKS

by *Melissa Cole*, Curator

Museums exist to inspire, to fascinate and to encourage creative thought. Given our curious natures and innate desire to collect, it is no wonder that the grand modern museum has its humble roots firmly planted in the privately owned collections of extraordinary objects from the past.

These collections of extraordinary natural and man-made objects were displayed in cabinets with many compartments, each filled with treasures reflecting the individual's desire to find his place within the larger context of nature and the divine.

Since 1957, our collection has grown in ways that may surprise our average visitor. Celebrating our first 60 years, the Oshawa Museum will feature objects with the richest stories to tell, from our 1837 Rebellion Box to our largest artefacts, the historic homes. This exhibit will feature 60 significant artefacts from our collection that continue to spark our imaginations and encourage dialogue.

As a homage to our own history, the OM, presents an interpretation of the cabinet of curiosity. Visitors will have the unique opportunity to discover various objects of curiosity and wonder, up close and in a personal way.

This exhibition is dedicated to the Museum's past Curators, not only for the artefacts they helped collect, but for the stories and material culture they helped to preserve for future generations.

Staff Favourites

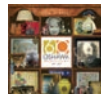


Curator, Melissa Cole's favourite collection is *Smith Potteries*.

When Melissa became Curator in April 2002, the museum had two pieces of Smith Potteries in the collection; the Oshawa Museum has actively acquired 25 additional pieces since that time.

DISCOVER OSHAWA MUSEUM'S STAFF FAVOURITES

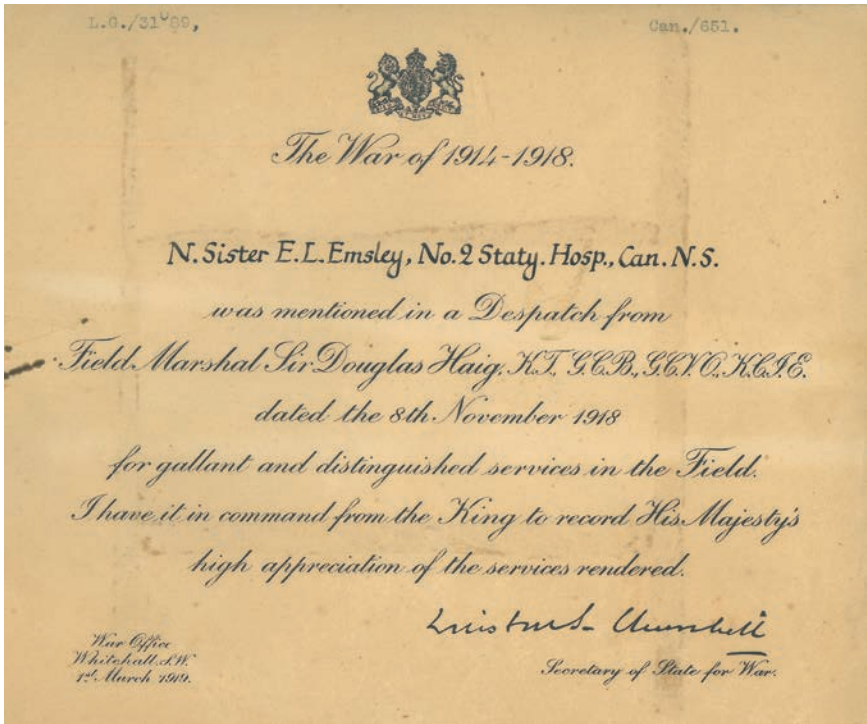
Look for small tent cards with our exhibit logo



VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE ARTEFACT

Tell us for a chance to win an Oshawa Historical Society annual membership and history gift bag.

MAYOR JOHN HENRY'S FAVOURITE ARTEFACT



World War I Despatch from Sir Douglas Haig for Oshawa native Nursing Sister Evangeline Emsley. 62-L-39

Mayor Henry's comments:

This World War 1 letter from Sir Douglas Haig to Oshawa native Nursing Sister Evangeline Emsley represents a time of revolutionary change in history for gender equality. Women were needed along with men to serve our country's military. Like their male counterparts, they left families behind to serve, often close to the front lines and within range of enemy attack.

The City of Oshawa has a proud and rich military history dating back 150 years, before WW1. It includes representation from outstanding and patriotic people like Nursing Sister Emsley. Just like the military of today, they were/are incredibly brave. They continue to be connected to our community, our identity and our hearts.

Hair Work

Hairwork jewellery grew out of a desire to keep a part of the loved one close to the wearer. “Godey’s Lady’s Book” from December 1850 introduced the craft to women which soon became a popular pastime. Various apparatus were used to create hair work, the most simple being a bandbox. Look for the braiding table (reproduction) in the parlour which is simple in construction and smooth to prevent any tearing of the hair. The actual table would be approximately 33 inches in height.

While hairwork jewellery was not used exclusively for mourning, it was a natural way to remember a deceased loved one.

The exhibit features various forms of hairwork, including two examples of hair wreaths, located in the Henry House parlour. Other examples of hair work include necklaces, brooches, bracelets & locket which can be seen in the bedroom.

Look for the exhibition logo near the artefacts:





Hair Jewellery 971.4.14, 971.4.8
Donated by Anonymous



Detail of Hair Wreath 970.49.5
Donated by Edith Taylor

Harriet Cock Portrait

Harriet Cock sits on a balcony in front of a formal balustrade. The rich velvet curtain frames her on one side with a seascape in the distance. She is formally dressed and holds a book on her lap. The detail lets us know that the sitter is an educated woman, while the curtain and setting tells us that she is a woman of means.

Only those of higher class would be in a position to have a large self-portrait commissioned of themselves, and as the museum staff have noted, this is one of a pair, the other being of Harriet Cock's daughter.

There were numerous portrait painters in England in the 19th century, including members of the famous Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, George Frederick Watts, Alfred Stevens. The portrait has not been signed and many have been painted by an itinerant artist or someone local to Cock's home in Cornwall. The work was taken off its stretcher and rolled to bring to Canada. This was not only a convenient way to move such a large painting, but also the safest means of transportation. This work represents an important part of Oshawa's history and highlights the life of one of its earliest colonial settlers.

Linda Jansma, Senior Curator, The RMG

This portrait is on display in Guy House, in the Verna Conant Gallery. Look for the exhibition logo near the artefacts:



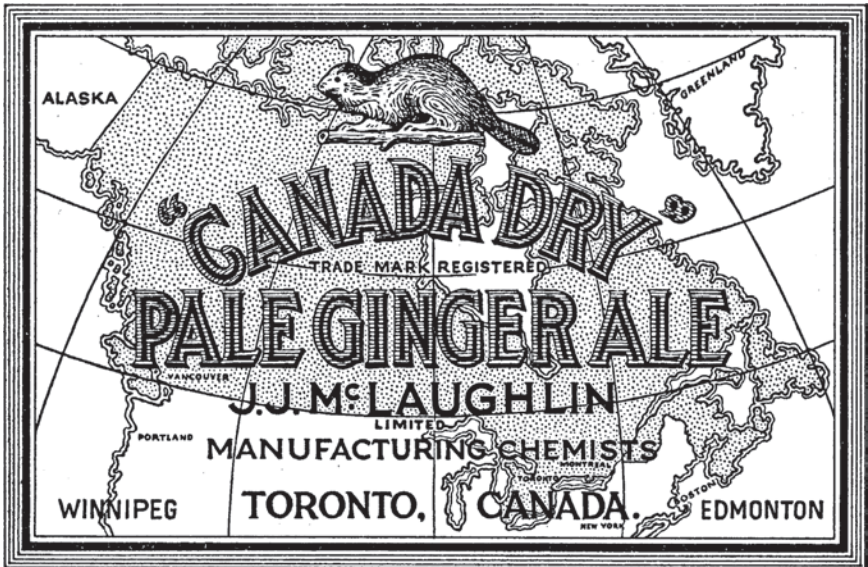


Portrait of Harriet (Grunny) Cock, A010.20.1
Donated by Jim Sadler

Curator's Note: On the map behind Grunny's image is the land that she owned in 1887. The parcels she owned are indicated by "Mrs. Cock", and she owned 252 acres of land.

J.J. McLaughlin

John James McLaughlin, the Ontario College of Pharmacy's gold medal winner in 1885, disregarded his father's wish to join him in the McLaughlin Carriage Company. Instead he established himself in the wholesale soda fountain business in Toronto. He manufactured as well as imported, mineral waters, syrups, creams, cordials, extracts and soda fountain supplies. By the time he incorporated as J.J. McLaughlin, Manufacturing Chemists in October 1905, he had already applied for a patent on his own formula for ginger ale, a popular drink first associated with Belfast, Ireland. It was his wife, Maude, who coined the marketing phrase "the champagne of ginger ales" for his Canada Dry Pale Ginger Ale. When J.J. McLaughlin died in 1914 at age 48 his two brothers, George and Sam, continued to run the business. In 1923, they sold J.J. McLaughlin Company to P.D. Saylor for one million dollars along with his formula and formed the public corporation, Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Incorporated.





J.J. McLaughlin Hygeia Water Bottle, 72-D-362
Acquired by Oshawa Historical Society

Farewell Cemetery

The Farewell Cemetery is located on the southeast corner of Harmony Road and King Street in Oshawa. The property on which the cemetery is located is a few hundred feet south of King Street. Mr. Moody Farewell donated the land to be used as a private burial ground for the Farewell family and their relatives. The Brown and Hinton families were also granted permission to bury relatives in the cemetery. Mr. Farewell divided the property to ensure each of his sons received a portion. The Farewell Cemetery had been in use from approximately 1827 until 1937.

The Farewell Cemetery was professionally excavated by Archaeological Services Inc. of Toronto. Several bodies had been buried outside of the cemetery boundaries. Archaeological Services Inc. was employed to excavate the bodies and rebury them on available space within the cemetery boundaries. The human remains and associated artefacts recorded during the investigation supplied valuable biomedical and archaeological information about this period. Artefacts that could not be placed back "in situ" were donated to the OM.



Before Conservation, Name Plate 994.28.32x
From the Farewell Cemetery Collection, Oshawa Museum



After Conservation, Name Plate 994.28.32x
From the Farewell Cemetery Collection, Oshawa Museum

Rebellion Boxes

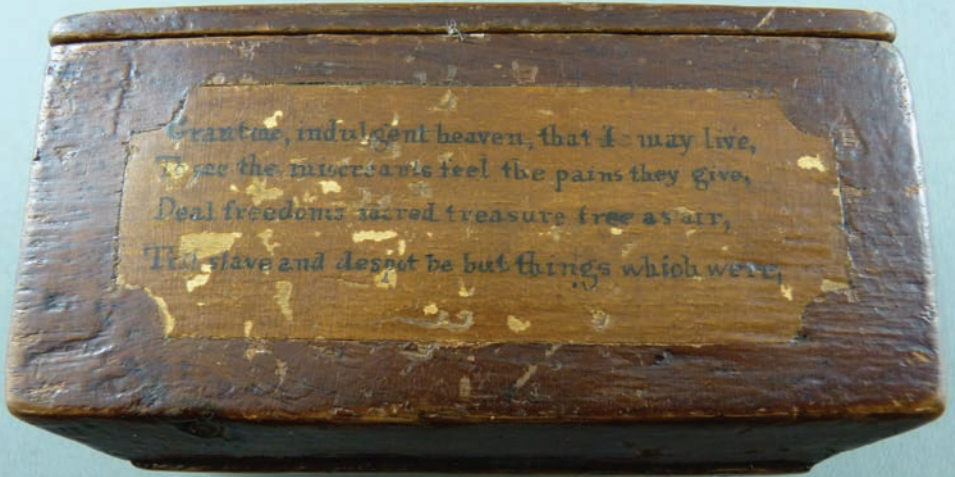
Many men who were arrested during the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837 carved what were to become known as Prisoner's Boxes or Rebellion Boxes, during their stay in the Toronto Gaol. The boxes carved by these men had sliding lids and dove-tailed corners. These men were predominantly farmers and laborers of small communities who simply wanted the right for their children to be educated, liberty to practice their religion freely and the right to elect representatives to the Legislative Assembly to speak on their behalf. One of these men was John Dickie.

John Dickie was a local farmer and silk weaver born in Paisley, Scotland in 1787. What has not been recorded in the pages of history, however, is the fact that John Dickie participated in the Rebellion of 1837 and was apparently arrested and jailed for his involvement. This biographical information has rather been recorded on these wooden Rebellion boxes.

These artefacts from the 1837 Rebellion contain key information about a man's life, information not seemingly found elsewhere. Little information was known about Dickie as the Rebellion of 1837 papers and jail registers at the Archives of Ontario contained no information about John Dickie. His death notice in the *Ontario Reformer* was short, and his tombstone in Union Cemetery contains only dates. If he did not create three little boxes and dedicate them to his family members James Houtt, 'Ln' Dickie and William Dickie, the fact that John Dickie participated in the 1837 Upper Canada Rebellion would have been lost in history.



Equal rights and Liberty
Be sacred to each heart



Grant me, indulgent heaven, that I may live,
To see the miscreants feel the pains they give,
Deal freedom's sacred treasure free as air,
That slave and despot be but things which were,



Presented to
Mrs John Dickie
from George Lamb, in Toronto
Gaol, committed on charge of
High Treason, June 22nd 1837

O happy are they when in their youth,
Are brought up, and love the truth,
For when our flesh when youth makes free,
Can never any more be free.



James D Houtt, from
John Dickie, Aug 8 1837

Rebellion Boxes 971.7.15 & 971.7.16
Donated by Anonymous



The Spirit Photo

Spirit photography attempts to capture images of ghosts and spiritual entities and was popular during the latter part of the 19th century. Photographers and mediums would advertise photographs featuring living persons with the ghosts of their departed loved ones. Such notable people as Arthur Conan Doyle and Mary Todd Lincoln are believed to be supporters of spirit photography.

The Spirit Photograph is of two men and one woman, of which one of the men is deceased having been “born again into the spirit life, July 20th, 1824”. The photograph was sent to Elder Thomas Henry by his son Ebenezer E. Henry of Levenworth, Kansas.

The elder Henry’s response to his son is recorded in a letter dated June 10th, 1873. As a minister of the Christian Church is it no surprise that Thomas Henry would have very firm beliefs when it came to the spirit world and spirit photography. The response is strongly worded, long and firm, scolding his son for taking part in what Thomas believes are *unsavoury activities*. Thomas states in his letter, “I do not dispute but what the picture has been taken. It is no of god, in my humble opinion, But of the Divil(sic), and show very clearly to me a falling away from God, and disbelieving his word”. Thomas Henry continues throughout his letter to impress upon his son the abomination that is the Spirit Picture and writes extensively of the biblical story of “King Saul, Samuel, and the Medium of Endor”.

A013.4.449 Thomas Henry Correspondence Collection



Spirit Photograph A013.4.449
Donated by Brian Winter
Thomas Henry Correspondence Collection

Autograph Quilts, 1887

There are two quilts in our collection which are 'mates'. The first was donated in the 1960s and the second was donated in the late 1970s. They feature a 'Friendship Block' pattern, with names embroidered in red in the centre. Many names repeat on both quilts. When the second quilt was donated in 1979, the donor included a history of the quilts, as follows:

Mary Douglas Keddie and our mother May Farewell (Mrs. Everson) were very close chums as girls and they each made an autograph quilt which their mothers, Mrs. Keddie and Mrs. AW Farewell, quilted for them in 1885. Before she died my mother gave me hers and later she gave me Mary Keddie's – which Jean Keddie had given her after Mary Keddie died. Some years later mother agreed that Helen should have her aunt's [Mary Keddie's] quilt. She was very happy to have it but later I saw in the paper that she had presented it to the Oshawa Museum. I have talked to my daughters and to my sisters and they agree with me that our mother's quilt be put in the museum in Oshawa and that we ask you to put the two quilts near together.



This photograph was taken at Welch's Photography Studio in Oshawa. The image is of Mary Keddie and May Farewell, each holding items related to needlework.

A000.1.66 Donated by Mary Hare



Quilt 966.14.1,
Donated by Mrs. Gathercote, niece of Mary Kiddie



Quilt 979.54.1,
Donated by Mrs. W.J. Salter



OSHAWA

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

— 1957 - 2017 —