ELGIN AND AREA HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2026

Box 480, Elgin, Ontario K0G 1E0

"Elgin's Finest Moment: 1956 Centennial Celebration", the Elgin and Area Heritage Society's 2026 display, currently welcoming the public at the Red Brick School, is a nostalgic, must-see adventure for all. Many visitors, often actual participators in the 1956 activities, are arriving anxious to catch sight of themselves, family members, friends and neighbours as they were back then. Others visitors, those with fewer local roots, are drawn in by this retrospective displaying in detail the face of Elgin at that time; its streetscapes, its store fronts, its homes, its life style, its culture. Everyone is captivated by the sense of pride, warmth and enthusiasm exhibited by the citizens of this small hamlet as they thoroughly enjoyed their little town's birthday.

It was the actions of the 1956 Elgin Lions Club that the EAHS acknowledges were the pivotal force behind the massive parade and other fun activities of the 2 day celebration; it was they who conceived the idea of Elgin's 100th anniversary party and it was they whose leadership enlisted countless individuals and community groups into joining forces. Together, with determination and cooperation, they all made the dream come true. Additionally, this year's display relied heavily on two picture collections totaling over 80 items: one grouping, the camera work of Leland "Lefty" Graham of Camp Red Cloud on Lake Opinicon, was shared with the Elgin Lions Club, who still display it at the Lions Hall. They in turn shared Lefty's work with the EAHS. A souvenir album of pictures snapped and assembled by Marjorie Jackson, an Elgin legend, comprised the second collection. Glen Russell, known for his outstanding design work on both the 2024 Clifford Pennock display and the 2025 Historic Rideau Canal display, generously donated his talents to digitally refreshing all these images, transforming them into this summer's visual feast.

Other highlights to enjoy on your visit to the Red Brick School include a new digital video review of "The Historic Rideau Canal", a new wall mural of the Red Brick School Restoration Project, memorabilia associated with the 1956 celebration, and of course, the replica 1905 classroom, the WWI and WWII tributes to our local heroes and much, much more.

A great deal awaits you at the Red Brick School this summer. Be sure you do not miss it!!!

Music in the Park – 2026

This year the Elgin and Area Heritage Societyhas expanded its "Music in the Park" program, by booking three Sunday afternoon musical concerts in Heritage Park, Elgin. It is our pleasure to make these entertaining, "no charge" events available to the community. Worth noting - all of the musicians involved generously donate their talents and time. Audience members may show their appreciation by placing a "Free Will Gift" in the donation jars provided. Money collected from each concert is matched by EAHS and is distributed to various community projects.

June 21st featured Bryan Cooper, Jenn Mann, and the Wild Parsnips – Herman Amberge and Matthew Churchill

Sunday, June 21st and Sunday, July 19th , saw audiences relaxing in the former school yard of the Red Brick School to listen to a variety of area performers covering an array of musical genres: classic rock, classic country, folk, and modern, along with some original compositions.

July 19th: Mark Easter, Jenn Man and Jumpin' Jimmy

Upcoming Concert: Sun., August 23:

TheBeverleyTrio, the classical chamber trio from Pennsylvania,who summer on Beverley Lake, will again delightlocalfanswith a Bach and friends concert; also featuredwillbethe premier of local composer Sharon Singer'smusicfolio expanded by Tom Heinze. Music will playfrom2-4pm. beside the Red Brick School. Bring yourownchairand water bottle. Fair Weather Permitting.

TheBeverley Trio pictured to the right: HaroldLevin (viola),Gayle Klaber(cello) and Tom Heinz(oboe)

Remembering Those Who Served

EAHS is always excited to expand its collections regarding the military service by local community members. Our volunteer researcher extraordinaire, Kim Proud, has done much to increase our knowledge of those in our community who served. In 2024 Kim authored two books entitled ***"WORLD WAR 1 - 156 Leeds & Grenville Oversees Battalion C.E.F."*** and ***"WW1 Leeds County Boys Fought & Died for Our Freedom".*** In November 2025 Kim completed her third researched work entitled "***They Were Educated at Elgin Continuation School & Served in WW2".*** Kim painstakingly researches each service record and strives to compose a short informative biography. Kim's writing reflects her compassion and respect for those who have served; she wishes them to be remembered. Thank you Kim!

Submitted by ***Mary S. Roantree***

Kim Proud is pictured here with the "Union Jack" window (salvaged from the Elgin Town Hall demolition) and the panoramic picture of the156th Leeds Battalion taken at CFB Barriefield before its departure for the WWI battle front. Sitting on the table beside her are the three books Kim has compiled highlighting our local soldiers who served in both WWI and WWII. You invited to drop by the RBS and peruse all these artifacts.

Lest we Forget – Remembrance Day Service November 9, 2025

It was a cold and snowy November Sunday as many members of the community dutifully gathered in Heritage Park, Elgin for the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 231's Remembrance Day Service. Pictured here is Dave Irwin, on hand with his bugle, and as he has done so many times before, he sounded out the haunting notes of the Last Post; the hearts of those present were filled with longing and pride for our lost soldiers. Thank you Dave for your commitment to this always meaningful occasion. The service was followed by an Open House and Reception in the Red Brick School sponsored by the EAHS.

Sue Warren Delights with Memories of her Grandfather – Herm Warren

To celebrate Ontario Heritage Week in February this year, the EAHS invited our local history "guru" , Sue Warren, to share with us her memories and highlights of the "The Life and Times of Herm Warren", her grandfather.

Sue Warren captivated us with stories of her grandparents' lives and gave us a glimpse into pre-WWI courtship; the First World War experience for a young man; post-war recovery from injuries, and the canal-man's life at Newboro and Chaffey's Lock. She shared photos, letters and engaging stories.

In attendance were many local residents, as well as folks who travelled from Kingston and Smiths Falls to the presentation.

The Warren family was well represented with Herm and Alice's granddaughter as well as two great grandchildren present.

Many thanks to Sue for a fun afternoon of insight, nostalgia and socializing.

Sue Warren

Submitted by Mary Roantree

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2026 - 2027

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Elgin and Area Heritage Society

This past fall, EAHS was approached by Marie White, Economic Development and Cultural Heritage Coordinator for Rideau Lakes Township, to contribute to the Agrarian Magazine, an on-line Canadian family publication that was running a series of articles on rural school experiences. Two members of the EAHS Board responded to the request. Printed here are articles by Bill Murray and Mary Carty highlighting the "special times" that were to be enjoyed from receiving a one room school education.

Life in a One Room Rural School Circa 1950

Starting in 1953, from Grade 1 through Grade 7, I spent my days at Pine Grove School, a little wooden building surrounded by majestic pine and maple trees; a world isolated from the surrounding community while classes were in session.

Pine Grove School

We had no means of communicating with anyone. No phone was available to call anywhere. A dug well provided water for all to drink; a pail served as our drinking fountain. As I recall the water bucket was never washed, only rinsed out as need's be, prior to the bucket being refilled with fresh water.

Two outside toilets, one on either side of the yard, provided washroom facilities; the challenges were many- no running water, coping with cold winter visits and, in the case of the boy's bathroom, a door that could never be locked, day or night. With such easy access, creatures of the forest, especially porcupines, delighted in chewing up the wooden seats; sadly, young gentlemen users were often afflicted with splinters in their behind.

Students spent recess and noon hour outside. The teacher would, periodically, come out to see that everyone was playing properly, whatever that was. Playground equipment consisted of a bat and a ball; we fashioned a diamond - one of the tall pine trees served as first base. Other games were invented as people tired of playing the same thing.

"Anti-I-Over" was a common playground activity. Two teams were formed taking positions, one on each side of the school. A soft ball was tossed over the roof of the school allowing the waiting team to catch it. Keeping the ball well hidden, the receiving team ran around the school to capture new players from the other team by tagging them with the ball. Because the yard was divided into a boys' and a girls' side, the game was allowed to continue as long as no one remained on the wrong side too long.

Every December, we held a Christmas Concert at the Women's Institute Hall in Chaffey's Lock. For several weeks prior, practices took place each day in the school; during the final two weeks, at least two rehearsals were held in the hall. We would walk the two miles to the hall in the afternoon, practice and then be picked up by the bus at 4 o'clock. Complaints about the cold or snow were few as we walked along that highway with our teacher in charge.

Our itinerant music teacher, Kathryn Scott, a resident of Elgin, visited us once a week. She assisted us with the concert's musical selections, as well as any dancing numbers in the program. I was not very fond of Mrs. Scott; when she was picking students for the dance numbers, she would often choose me first. She told me that I was her first choice because my father had been a good dancer when he was young.

As previously mentioned, Pine Grove School was a wooden structure having an enclosed porch entranceway at the front and a woodshed attached to the back of the building. Each spring a new load of wood would be delivered to the school; students would dutifully carry the wood into the shed for the winter. Behind the teachers desk was a wood box extending conveniently out into the woodshed. This allowed wood to be loaded into the box through to the schoolroom eliminating many a chilly, wintery trek outside each time the stove needed a new block of wood.

The schoolroom itself had very high ceilings covered with a metal into which a pattern had been stamped.Our desks were bench seats, originally, which held two students. This sometimes posed a problem if one personhad more books and scribblers than their space would hold. Our texts were not current; I recall a grey-shaded geography book with a publication year of 1929.

It was an exciting event for us when we received a hectograph worksheet. Since our teachers hadnophotocopieror ditto machines, the hectograph was the only means of making multiple copies of student worksheets.Itwasa special honour to be chosen to help make the copies. Usually, it entailed pulling the long sheetsofpaperoffajelly-like substance which had been prepared by the teacher in a long flat pan resembling my mother'scookiesheet.

Did we miss anything in our educational experience at Pine Grove School? No …. I don't thinkwedid.DoIwishit had been different? Certainly not!

Looking back on my educational experience at Pine Grove School, I can't but admire the teacherwhowasgiven the job of educating, nurturing and looking after the safety of students with eight different levelsofmaturity.They had an unenviable task to say the least. I know that after having taught all elementary grade levelsforover30years in Kent County, I was very fortunate to have been able to learn in the one room school environment.

Submittedby***BillMurray***

A Special Dancy School Christmas Concert

Mike Carty

My brother Mike, a grade one student at Dancy School, fondly related this story of his early 1950's experience of the school's annual Christmas Concert.

As he tells it, one day in the bleak, gray days of late November, his teacher, Miss Mainse, (soon to be Mrs. Vivian Perrin) announced to her pupils that it was time for them all to begin to prepare for the coming Christmas Concert. Much excitement filled the air; everyone always looked forward to this yearly event. This particular year, Miss Mainse added to their anticipation by surprising them all when she indicated that they would hold the concert in the evening, not in the afternoon which had always been the practice, as of course, there were no electrical lights in the building.

In the days ahead, though many expressed their doubts about this ambitious plan, Mike included, Miss Mainse held her silence continuing to insist that the plan would be successful.

The big day arrived and all was prepared for the show: play lines and poetry recitations were learned, Christmas carols were practiced to perfection, costumes were finished, the bedsheet curtains were hung and props were in place; even extra seating was provided by spreading planks across wooden blocks to form benches. But ….. still no sign of how things would possibly go on despite the darkness that evening. -

Amazement greeted the cast and audience when they arrived to a well-lit schoolhouse with six large gas lanterns safely hung from the ceiling. Needless to say, everyone, Miss Mainse, students, parents, older siblings, grandparents and neighbours alike had an especially enjoyable pre-Christmas celebration that year. The evening performance enabled so many more community members to attend and share in the holiday gala.

The "man of the hour" was Miss Mainse's fiancé, Frank Perrin, who, with a few construction buddies had installed the lighting late that afternoon. Years after, in conversation with Vivian, Mike expressed to her how all the students saw her boyfriend as a great hero for the gift he had given to them that evening. In return, Vivian revealed to Mike that the lighting was not Frank's only contribution to the occasion – he also filled in as Santa Claus.

Submitted by ***Mary Carty***

The Sand Lake Mica Mine

Elgin native son, Neil Pattersoncontinues his yearly habitof sharing with usan article based on the details of his research into a forgotten commercial venture from the early economic history of the Elgin area. His 2026 focus is directed to the Sand Lake Mica Mine, perhaps an entity about which, till now, you have lacked any knowledge. To update yourself, please read on!

The 1904 Ontario Report of the Bureau of Mines states that, "the Sand Lake Mica Mine was the largest mica mine in the region"; a formidable claim indeed! Located in South Crosby Township, Concession 7, Lot 14, about 4 miles southwest of Elgin just off the Davis Lock Road, the Sand Lake Mica Mine began as a phosphate mine around 1870 when Edward Schultze mined 15 tons of phosphate for export to Germany. In 1900, the mine was acquired by the Brockville Mining Company. (Previously, it had been known as the McLaren and Fulford Mine and sometimes as the Hardy Mine). From 1905 to 1907, it was mined extensively by the Brockville Mining Company, employing up to 20 miners. In 1912, the mining rights were purchased by Mendels and Smith of Perth. In 1900, the mining complex had a structure that housed a 20-horsepower steam engine used in hoisting and drilling and in powering a pump to keep the working area dry as the mine was 75 feet below ground level. There was a culling shed, a boarding house, and a cook house; 3 years later a tramway was built. The tramway carried the barrels of mica from the mine to a large loading dock on Sand Lake. From there the barrels of mica were transported via the Rideau Canal to Perth, and later to Kent Brothers in Kingston for cobbing (ie. slicing the rocks of mica into thin see-through sheets).

Sand Lake Mica Mine as it is today. ***Photo by Bill Murray***

Mica does not conduct electricity and can withstand very high temperatures; qualities that allowed it to be used as insulators inside light bulbs and radio tubes; as windows in stoves, lanterns, buggies and some cars; additionally, it was ground up for lubricants used in paint and glaze for floor and wall tiles .

The production volume of the mine was inconsistent between 1900 and 1912. The mine's highest income year came in 1903 when it produced $23,000 worth of mica, about 20% of Ontario's total production that year of $103,205. The 1901 Census names 12 miners and mine manager, Duncan Page, as living in the boarding house. Also noted in 1903 by the Ontario Bureau of Mining, the Brockville Mining Company installed a 40-horsepower steam engine.

In 1902, Smith and Lacy of Perth, encouraged by the rich production, bought the mining rights for the adjacent lot 13 and blew several test pits. Two years later they sold those rights to the Loughborough Mining Company who never found any extension of the lot 14 mica vein. Unfortunately, the Sand Lake Mine did not run horizontally, but was what was called a chimney vein that ran vertically.

During this period, John Sullivan, manager of the Brockville Mining Company, moved to Elgin, taking up residence in a 2-story brick house just past the Dunn House on the Davis Lock Road. Two of the principles of the Brockville Mining Company, McLaren and Fulford, previously the mineral rights owners of the phosphate mine, sold their product for fertilizer to England and Germany. The 1907 Ontario Mining Report supplies these details:… the mica extracted from the mine is of a very dark amber ….the superintendent is Mr. H. Stanger …. there are 15 miners employed. The size of the mine is 85 feet in depth and 40 feet in width with a 40 horse-power boiler for the drills, pumps and the donkey."

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In 1912, the mine, newly purchased by Mendels andSmith of Perth, reportedly marketed 12 tons of mica valued at $20,570. That was the last year of mining ontheproperty. However, in 1916, John Sullivan and Jack Fahey of Elgin bought the mine and began to extract amica/stone mixture from its slag heaps. This detritus was transported by wagon to a newly-erected, so called "cobbing" building in Elgin (where today stands a small engine repair business). The actual processing done thereconsisted of separating the mica from the stone. Freshly cleaned, the retrieved mica was bagged, taken to the newlyestablished Elgin Railway Station and shipped to twodifferent paint companies who had contracted with Sullivan and Fahey to supply them with the product.

Today, near the mine entrance, can be seen four long black bolts sticking out of the ground. Ray Murray, a nearby resident, said that these rods secured the pulleys, cables and steam powered donkey used to transport the barrels of mica to the dock. Time has partially uncovered the remains of the pipe that exhausted the water from the mine.

With the development of J.W. Lane and the accompanying residences, the site of the mine has almost totally disappeared. The remains of the boarding house, the steam engine building, the tramway and the cribs, and dock at Sand Lake have vanished. When the mine closed, Philip Murphy obtained a wooden bagging machine that had been used to bag mica. Ray Murray said it was used to bag mica to take to the dock by wagon. Whether it was used before the tramway or after is not known. Later on, farmers used this equipment to bag grain to take to the mill at Forfar.

All that is left as evidence of where the mine existed is a large hole filled with water.

Submitted by Neil A. Patterson

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As in past years, the Elgin andAreaHeritage Society has beenmost fortunate to have a generous community, both individuals and groups, who have given us a great deal of financial support. The years 2023 to 2025 are no exception. Below is a list of those who have made contributions in the form of a membership purchase, personal or memorial donations, as well as, community and group gifts and grants. We remain very grateful for this support**.**

(EAHS Membership/Donation Form – See Page 7)

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