

Friends of the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan Annual Report 2023

In 2023 the gopher was very active communicating on a good number of topics with approximately 50 e-mails being dispatched. A few of the titles appear below.

“Headlines” e-mail Edition Titles

Traditions are Important *Bridges & Riots*
Names all-over the Map
Skeleton in the Closet
Was it worth it? *Staying in Touch*
No News is bad News
Flying Leap *Rock On*
Common Pest Edition *Homesteading Rush?*
Ten Dollar Gamble
Read All About It! *Digital Film Norway*
Catching up again *Consider yourself Warned*
Name Game *One-act Edition*
Get the picture?
Welcome to Homesteaders

Membership Numbers

At the beginning of 2024 the total number of members had inched up to 509, with more members added during 2023 than had dropped off. Of that total, 286 members resided in Saskatchewan and 223 outside the province. The boundaries are rather arbitrary, but 148 Saskatchewan members are classified as living in Regina and area, within easy travel distance of the Archives.

Notable Discussions

During 2023 some topics generated considerable discussion among interested members who shared their knowledge and links to additional information. An overview of such topics includes:

- Limits on women homesteaders under the *Dominion Lands Act*
- A CBC-TV project about the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, which led to discussion about those people who were already here, and their lives in Saskatchewan
- An investigation into a curious labyrinth-like structure in northern Saskatchewan, told by PAS board member Doug Chisholm
- The historical research, storytelling and playwriting of Friends member Keith Foster, including broadcasts on Regina's community radio station, CJTR
- News of the Archives' refreshed website launch in June 2023
- Concerns about the decline of local news coverage and the impacts on archivists and researchers
- The importance of photographs as historical documents, illustrated in various discussions during the year

We also received a letter from the Friends of the British Columbia Archives (FBCA) reaching out to other Friends organizations across Canada. Our friends in BC want to know about the activities and goals of other similar organizations, and if there is common ground for further cooperation.

The FBCA operates in a different way from the Friends of the PAS. It charges an annual \$10 membership fee, makes public lectures and presentations, and has its own stand-alone website. The letter was distributed to all Friends of the PAS members in August 2023, but an invitation to discuss it brought little response.

Volunteers and the Photo Project

Our long-running volunteer work with the Archives involves gathering and recording information from the photo archives, prior to the photos being digitized. After about ten years, interrupted by a pandemic, and with a transition from one software system to another, the volunteers completed combing through the **A** photo files, which are smaller photos, including some post cards.

Madeleine McLuhan-Meyers, who has guided the project from its inception, estimates that volunteers processed more than 60,000 **A** photos, including 11,000 in a sprint to the finish in February and March, 2023.

Since the volunteers turned to the **B** files, which are in a variety of sizes, and of larger dimensions, Madeleine estimates 1850 were processed between May and November.



FOPASKer Lynn McCaslin has examined and scanned thousands of photos, and recorded related information. Here, he holds the last of the smaller **A** photo files.

Student Internship at the Archives

by Leanne Tremblay

In 2023 the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina's Department of History partnered together to offer for the first time an internship opportunity at the Provincial Archives. From September to December 2023, one day per week for a period of twelve weeks, an

The intern was specifically tasked with projects related to outreach. Amanda Weinberger, an Honours student studying the history of the Saint Joseph Colony located east of Regina, completed the following projects:

- A “Throwback Thursday” series of social media posts highlighting schools and educational practices in the early days of Saskatchewan.
- A “Saskatchewan Timeline” to be used as a tool to inform social media posts specific to notable dates in the province’s history.
- An exhibit showcasing colour photography from the Axel Petersen collection to be used in the Reading Room’s gallery space, shared on the PAS website as a virtual exhibit, and shared on social media as a series of individual posts.

Additionally, the intern was able to:

- Shadow each PAS department to learn their function and role.
- Learn how to use and practice using the PAS online catalogue.
- Retrieve and interfile archival records.
- Handle a variety of formats, including photo negatives, slides, textual documents, and microfilm.

The PAS is interested in continuing this partnership with the U of R Department of History. It is an incredible opportunity for students to gain pertinent experience to help them in their future careers and for members of the heritage community to benefit from this work by learning more about records and stories held in the archives.

Update on Restrictions at the Archives

While COVID may no longer be top-of-mind, it and other nasty viruses are still circulating. As an agency operating at arms length from the provincial government, the Archives follows protocols set out by the government.

Members of the Friends of the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan who are able to visit will have noticed that some restrictions have been relaxed, although some measures continued throughout 2023, such as plastic barriers at the registration and reference desks, daily cleaning, and large spaces between research tables.

Appointments to visit are no longer required - although they are a good idea - and Archives staff have resumed offering tours of the new facility.