



NEWSLETTER

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www.commandamuseum.ca

Jan. - Feb. 2025

February is Black History Month and one cannot honour our past without acknowledging all significant contributions to that past. While most of the early settlers to the Commanda area were not Black, Black veterans of the War of 1812 received land grants to the south in Oro Township. Also, did you know that the first person of African heritage, Mathieu Da Costa, came to Canada in 1604, along with a group of French explorers. Mr. Da Costa was a multilingual interpreter and a valuable member of the French expedition. The Commanda Museum acknowledges and honours the contributions of Black Canadians to this amazing country.



Message from the President

Well, hello everyonewinter has a way of reminding us of who is in charge.....like everyone else, in this crystal, cold paradise, I have learned to embrace itmy husband, not so much.

We recently held our first 2025 Board of Directors' meeting and our illustrious group of volunteers struck a balance of discourse, problem solving, best practices and presenting new ideas all wrapped with careful consideration of expenditures, wise decision making and, a huge dollop of laughter and good will and.....that's us.

I am sure you are all now aware of our latest endeavours.....in May, a Thrift Shop will be established at the Museum, accompanied by an "on-line auction ", already in progress, and we have obtained an [online 50/50 raffle](#) license with our first raffle draw date occurring February 28.....great fun and all proceeds from these new endeavors go to programming and the upkeep of our beloved Museum and Church.

The Museum has donation boxes in Trout Creek (Country Tanks), at the Museum and soon to be at the Restoule Legion for items for our Thrift Store. Please consider joining the [Commanda Museum Online Auction](#) group on Facebook to participate in the on-line auctions that we are hosting in prior to the Thrift Shop opening. The next online auction goes live this week!

Anyone who owns a home is fully cognisant of the cost of keeping it in good repair and maintaining the out buildings and grounds , etc.....well, that's us, times ten.

Check out our "events" below and save the date(s)!

Speaking on behalf of our hardworking Board, stay safe, warm and productive.

Darlene Erskine

President, Gurd and Area Historical Corporation

Upcoming Events for 2025

- April 4, 2025 - Matt Burkhart and Davey Meloy - Join us for an intimate and cozy musical evening featuring two local musicians that are highly revered. It's the perfect setting to relax and enjoy some great music up close. Tickets on sale soon!
- May 17, 2025 - Grand Opening of our new Thrift Shop and highly anticipated re-opening of the renovated Commanda Trinity Lutheran Church
- July 1, 2025 - Strawberry Social / Canada Day Celebrations – our long-standing, much-anticipated season opening event. Bring your appetite, your singing voice and be prepared to stand in line for one of our “nearly world-famous milk shake”
- August 16, 2025 - Summerfest is back! - a full-day of events, displays and fantastic music

COMMANDA MUSEUM PRESENTS

APRIL 4, 2025



MATT BURKHART & DAVEY MELOY

Tale's from the Treasury

Ah, winter....a time to rest, relax, and recharge....unless you're self-employed and volunteer with several organizations, such as my partner and myself do, but we're trying better to take time to relax and recharge, especially to avoid the burn-out we have experienced in previous years.

One such volunteer position is of course, as the Treasurer/ Bookkeeper for the Gurd and Area Historical Corporation, the corporate name of the charity that operates as Commanda Museum. I took over the position from Ruth Lunn who put in many years providing oversight of the charity's books and am working diligently to make sure we remain in compliance with our charity status so that means....charitable donation receipt season!

Feeling much like good ol' Saint Nick, I have made a list of donors in 2024 and will be checking in twice prior to issuing them but...BUT...BUT fret not if you didn't get around to submitting a charitable donation before the end of 2024, the good folks in Canada's Department of Finance have extended the donation period to February 28, 2025! So yes, you can still provide a donation to the Gurd and Area Historical Corporation, up to February 28, 2025, and receive a donation receipt (\$20 and above) to put toward your 2024 tax return. For ease of donating, click the button below to get to our CanadaHelps page.

The end date for donations to be included on your 2024 taxes also happens to be the draw date for our very first ever online [50/50 raffle](#)! The total pot is getting close to \$2,000, as of writing this, and we are confident that it will climb even further. This venture into online lottery fundraising is particularly advantageous as it takes very little effort on the part of our dedicated team of volunteers, who are strapped for time, as it is. Instead of hustling to sell physical tickets, we are able to rely on Rafflebox, a Canadian company that specializes in online raffles. With this online approach, we are also able to reach folks from all over Ontario, including the numerous descendants of the folks that ended up settling here after travelling the Old Nipissing Road. Make sure to share this opportunity with your friends and family and get your tickets soon - the more tickets sold, the bigger the winning pot!

Writing from "downtown" Commanda (Forest & Farm),

Jonathan Harris

Treasurer, Gurd and Area Historical Corporation



[Donate Here!](#)

Echoes of the Past - A Glimpse into Local History



By 1880, the Canada Central Railway, later to be merged with the Canadian Pacific Railway, was gradually extending its tracks up the Ottawa River towards Lake Nipissing. It was generally expected that the Canada Central would pass through Nipissing Village and skirt the south side of Lake Nipissing. This plan did not go unnoticed by one Alexander Peter Cockburn.

A.P. Cockburn was a successful merchant who had established stores in both Orillia and Gravenhurst, and became the first Member of the Ontario Legislature for the Muskoka District in 1867 and the Dominion Parliament in 1872. He also founded a modest steamship company on Lake Muskoka in 1865 to bring freight, passengers, and the mail to the early settlements there. Things changed dramatically, however, in 1875, when the Northern Railroad completed its extension from Barrie to Gravenhurst making the Muskoka District truly open for settlement. Villages grew, hotels were built, sawmills were constructed, A.P. Cockburn's steamship line prospered, so much so that it eventually became the largest inland steamship company in Canada.

Hoping to repeat his success with the imminent arrival of the railway in the Nipissing District, A.P. Cockburn trekked up to the tiny Village of Nipissing in September of 1880 and toured the lake on the sailboat "Louise". Convinced that a steamship line based in Nipissing was viable, A.P. Cockburn returned south and made plans for his first steamship for Lake Nipissing. It was to be about 100 feet in length with a five-and-a-half-foot propeller. He, in fact, managed to get the machinery and boiler ordered and delivered to Rosseau before the end of the year.

In January 1881, Mr. Cockburn's new firm, called the Muskoka and Nipissing Navigation Company, received its charter. Over the winter, a gang of men were busy building the new steamer at Chapman's Landing. The parts were cut in Gravenhurst and hauled up the Old Nipissing Road on sleighs. In April of 1881, the new steamer, named the "SS Inter-Ocean", was launched stern-first, under the command of Captain Alfred Burritt of Thornbury.

Using Nipissing as her home port, the SS Inter-Ocean began making regular trips to all parts of the lake, averaging 12 miles per hour and departing at 8 am and arriving in Sturgeon Falls by 11 a.m.

Over the next century many vessels were engaged on Lake Nipissing in the lumber trade, commercial fishing, freight, passenger traffic and tourism. From the 1920s to the mid-1930s there were as many as 28 steam vessels operating on Lake Nipissing.

Gord McLaren

Director/Chair, Gurd and Area Historical Corporation

**Gurd & Area Historical
Corporation/ Commanda Museum**

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