



*Preserving, promoting and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.*

## **Our cultural moment this month celebrates a local historian**

In January Wellington North lost one of its most valuable keepers of local history. Mabel Henderson lived in the area her whole life, born in West Garafraxa and spending her whole adult life in Arthur. In that time, she came to know the local families and soon found out where their ancestors originated and where they settled.

Mabel's daily work developed her interest in genealogy and her familiarity with local citizens. She delivered mail on a local rural route and was a school bus driver long enough to get to know two generations of young people and their families.

Mabel also assisted at Arthur Library, among the books she loved to read and where she could get to know those who came to borrow books. And she was a storyteller who could hold everyone's attention whether giving a sad or a humorous account.



These experiences led Mabel to become a prized founding member of the Arthur and Area Historical Society. At the monthly meetings she always asked questions of the presenters that illuminated their subjects. But her most important gift was her prodigious memory and the way she used it to add to people's information about their families. When someone came in to research their ancestry, Mabel would provide important facts and relate stories about their grandparents or other relations that no-one else knew. Any new visitors to the Wednesday afternoon Historical Society openings brought a gleam to Mabel's eye, and she soon had traced their family history and all the relationships involved.

The Society's Canada 150 book project on local veterans of the two World Wars benefitted immeasurably from Mabel's input. Along with Mabel's interest in local people's history was her warmth in welcoming newcomers to Arthur and quickly learning about their families. Much of Mabel's research was kept in files which will continue to benefit our local knowledge. But we will always miss her and all the stories that she still had to tell.

Submitted by Gail Donald, Wellington North Cultural Roundtable