

## Checked Out Through Time: ABHS presentation explores deep roots of Caledon's Public Library system

**By Riley Murphy, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter**

Jules Maule-ffinch, a Caledon resident for over four decades and a longtime member of the Albion Bolton Historical Society (ABHS), took ABHS members on a trip down memory lane this Monday as she presented the History of the Albion and Bolton Libraries.

Maule-ffinch recounted the various locations, renditions, and changes that occurred for over 180 years.

What piqued her interest in the subject ties back to her long relationship with Caledon's library; her family has been members since 1987.

While going through slides preparing for the big presentation, Maule-ffinch even recognized her son's name in one of the library card registries.

Maule-ffinch also volunteered with the Caledon Public Library in numerous ways over the years; she once volunteered with the group known as the 'Friends,' or Friends of the Caledon Public Library.

'I've been involved with the Library for a long time, I know a lot of the staff, it's almost like an extended family. When it came to looking from a historical point of view, it sort of suited really, really well,' Maule-ffinch recounted on the day's presentation.

Countless hours went into the presentation that day, as she noted not only did she spend more than five weeks at the Bolton branch of the library, reserving the scanner for up to three hours each time, but she also spent time at the University of Toronto and numerous days at the Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives (PAMA), collecting, researching, and obtaining documents to aid in her presentation.

Maule-ffinch took the society back to the early 1800s, with the settlement of Albion and the very first schoolhouses.

Books were not a high priority at this time, with most remaining at schoolhouses and churches, and then, in 1868, the Mechanics Institute established a one-room library in Bolton.

The Mechanics Institute was a movement that began providing working men with knowledge of science and technology beyond their daily lives.

They were among the first institutions to provide lending libraries.

From there, the library moved several times, changed hands, and had various librarians at the helm.

The library was eventually moved to the Town Hall after being relocated from stores, private residences, and other locations.

'The library continued to serve the community in the cramped room in Town Hall,' Maule-ffinch told the ABHS.

Many members even recalled, after the meeting, a time when they would go to that very 'cramped room' to visit the library themselves.

And then, by 1964, 'ambitious ideas' for a Public Union library began to materialize.

This became the community's centennial project as they worked together to raise funds for their very own library.

In February of 1965, the Corporation of the Township of Albion and the Corporation of the Village of Bolton agreed to form a Union Public Library, the Albion and Bolton Union Public Library, and a massive fundraising undertaking followed.

Many schools pitched in to help, with Palgrave Public School students even raising money through hot-dog sales.

On May 28, 1967, the opening ceremony for the Albion and Bolton Public Library on Ellwood Drive was held.

The library began to grow into the space we know and love today, with branches opening in various communities such as Inglewood.

Today, the library still provides books, newspapers, and magazines as it once did, and now has thousands of visits and library card holders, in addition to programs for all ages.

"I still use this regularly, I've saved over \$1,200," remarked Maule-ffinck on her own library card.

The presentation shared that the existing system results from the amalgamation of the Caledon East Public Library, the Township of Caledon Public Libraries, and the Albion and Bolton Public Union Library, all of which were comprised of previous libraries.

As the presentation came to a close, members of the ABHS shared their own memories of the library, even recognizing their names on slides in the archives or seeing their faces pop up in old fundraising photos.

Members shared their memories of when the library was in the Town Hall, remarking on the favourites they used to read and go searching for.

Maule-ffinck says that one of the biggest points she wanted to drive home that day was the essence of community that made the library happen and grow into what it is today.

"That's really been the state, right from the beginning. The Bolton family bought the books to start with, but the village was so small at that time that it just didn't last," says Maule-ffinck, thinking back on the humble beginnings.

Various past library staff members travelled from surrounding townships to attend the presentation that night and even received a round of applause from the crowd.

Looking back on old books stamped with various library adaptations over the years, or past library cards, ABHS members truly experienced a page-turner of a presentation on Monday evening.