

2021 Award of Merit Recipient – the late Mary Haskill

Our second Award of Merit recipient is the late Mary Haskill. Mary grew up in Owen Sound and moved to Midland deep in the depression of the 1930's with her husband George to raise their family.

George worked for Ontario Hydro, installing power lines to cottage country and the rural farms of the area. George soon went into business with his brother-in-law, Leslie Barber, and opened Barber & Haskell, an electrical appliance business that is still a staple of Midland and area.

In the early years, Mary worked in the family business and raised her family. Once her children had grown and the Haskills sold their shares in the business, Mary was able to devote more time to her hobby of researching and writing. In the mid-70's, Midland Free Press editor Doug Reed asked Mary to write a weekly column. After a call from Eleanor Worfol with a story about her father, former Mayor of Midland, Mary's career as a newspaper writer was born. Mary Haskill wrote a weekly article for the Free Press for many years, sharing exciting stories of the people, places and the history of Midland and surrounding community. Mary later became the Director of the Huronia Museum and in 2002 Mary wrote a book of these stories that was published by the Huronia Museum called, "Nosing Into the Past – Life and Times in Huronia".

Mary's other passion was the performing arts. She was a lifetime member and patron of the Huronia Players performing every duty from volunteering acting to publicity. She also had an exceptional ability to find unique props for productions.

Mary received numerous awards for her community service, including Huronia Museum's Heritage Award, Ontario Heritage Foundation Award, Winner of a Toronto Star short story contest and runner up for a character award by Theatre Ontario. One of her accomplishments remains present in our very own Council Chambers, the Coat of Arms of Midland. In 1989, Mayor Ted Symons asked Mary to design the Town of Midland's Coat of Arms. After much research and hard work by Mary, Midland's Coat of Arms was officially approved by the Governor General of Canada and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Mary always remained humble about her vast knowledge of local history and always shunned the word "expert" by saying "the more I learn, the more I find I don't know". The community definitely benefited by her presence here.

Today, it is with great pleasure to present the Award of Merit to the late Mary Haskill and we welcome her daughter, Ms. Elizabeth Peden, who will be accepting this award on her mother's behalf.