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# ARCHIVES

news

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### Bylaws Conserved Archivists Among Us What's In A Name?

*Right: Conservator Rosaleen Hill, centre, shows Richmond Review photographer Mark Patrick how she removed damaging tape from an early Bylaw. The Archives held a number of open houses for City staff and others during the course of the project. Richmond Museum Curator Jennifer Breckon stands in the background.*



*After being removed from their bindings, treated and repaired, the Bylaws were placed in acid-free folders to be placed in storage boxes in the Archives vault.*

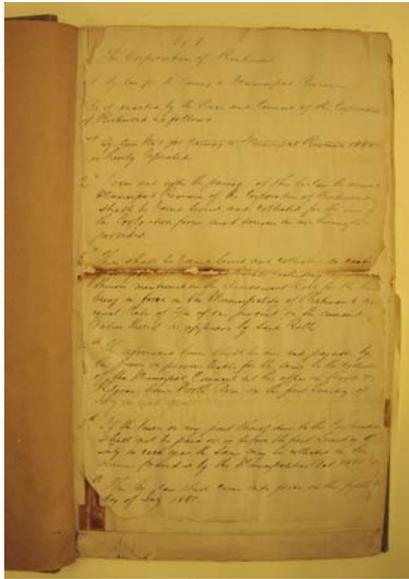
## Bylaws Conserved as part of Richmond's 125th

*By Rosaleen Hill and Lynne Waller*

As part of Richmond's 125th birthday celebrations in 2004 the City of Richmond Archives undertook a major conservation project to ensure the long-term preservation of some of our most historic records. The Bylaws are extremely significant records as they document the beginning of civic government in our community at the time European settlers were becoming established in the west.

The City's first 197 Bylaws were nearly destroyed in a fire which engulfed Richmond Town Hall in late 1912. Two auditors were reviewing the City's financial records, with a kerosene heater to warm the wood frame building.

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*Bylaw 1 was charred at the fold. This photo shows it prior to treatment.*



*The bath in high quality neutral water floated off dirt and reduced the acid quality of the paper.*

*The photo on the right shows the section of the Archives work room used for conservation projects. The large pipe near the ceiling is an exhaust fan used when toxic chemicals are found. Canadian Springs was the source of reverse osmosis premium water used in the de-acidification baths. The company said it was one of the more unusual uses for their product.*

Bylaws Conserved, continued from page 1.

By mistake a can of gasoline was poured on the kerosene heater. The result was an explosion which destroyed the building. One of the men, Mr. Lancaster, died of his injuries.

The Council immediately extended a “hearty vote of thanks” to Reverend M. Wright and all others who helped to save the records of the Municipality, according to local historian Mary Keen in her 1995 book “Meeting Places” about Richmond City Halls. In fact, the auditors and bystanders could not save all the records. They did bring out the City Council Minutes and almost all of the Bylaws. Other documents, including correspondence, were lost. A few of the early Bylaws appear to have been acquired from copies held by the Provincial Government of the day.

Some charring can be seen on the edges of the Bylaws under treatment. The heat of the fire also hastened the increase of acid levels in the paper. In their pre-treatment condition, even gentle handling could result in damage. Acidification in paper has been described as a “slow fire” - it has the same effects but just just takes longer to happen. There were edge tears, dog ears, embrittlement and breakage. The style of binding had resulted in tears and paper breakage along the sewing lines. The glue from mending tapes did further damage.

When Rosaleen Hill, a conservator, examined the Bylaws in detail she found their life span would not exceed 45 years. Without treatment they would turn to dust.

She tested every one of the 697 pages for colourfastness of the inks. Those with a good rating were immersed in a waterbath with chemicals to reduce the acid levels. The paper was also cleaned by in this process. With some of the pages the smoke of a fire 92 years ago could be smelled. Every page was deacidified and repaired by Rosaleen Hill. The new lifespan of these old Bylaws? About 300 years!

While in Richmond Rosaleen has delivered a number of workshops on conservation topics: two days on emergency planning and salvage of archival materials at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site; one day on preservation methods for modern digital media for archivists at the City of Richmond Archives; and a public workshop on conservation of family heirlooms at the Richmond Cultural Centre.



# The Archivists Among Us

by *Lynne Waller*

Often archivists are mistaken for historians. The archivists' role in 2005 consists of the collection, organization, administration, storage and dissemination of large volumes of recorded knowledge. A historian is a writer or synthesiser of this knowledge. An archivist is a "keeper" of the records.

Two hundred years ago the roles of archivists and historians were more entwined. Since then, the proliferation of information technologies and introduction of knowledge-based economies have altered the practical patterns of an archivist's daily work and caused more specialization. For example there are archivists who deal solely with privacy laws, or, with modern and electronic records as do the Records and Information staff at City Hall.

Some archivists use their training in large-scale records administration as a base for a career in public administration. David Weber, Manager of Legislative Services in Richmond's City Clerk's Office, chose this route. Ken Young, Manager of Records and Information, is responsible for management of the Records and Information resources of the City - from records being newly created to those deemed to be so valuable they are at the Archives for permanent retention.

Not a historian in this bunch!

The City of Richmond Archives's web pages have a new look and a new URL - [www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/about/about.htm](http://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/about/about.htm). Among other changes we added a link to the website of the Association of Canadian Archivists describing the role of archivists in a modern world.



*Susan Walters holds a joint Library and Archives degree from UBC - a three year post graduate program. She is currently working on a project to complete photograph identifications from fishing industry donations. This project has been funded by the Friends of the Richmond Archives. She also works as an auxiliary librarian in the Richmond Public Library system. She specializes in locating hard-to-find information in electronic databases.*

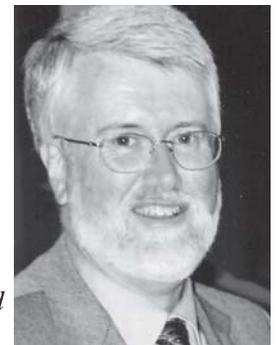
From "Frequently Asked Questions" at <http://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/about/faq.htm>, see the following:

**Q: What does an archivist do?**

*An archivist is described in dictionaries as a "keeper of records," a person who collects notable documents and preserves them for the future. In modern times archivists are often linked with other large scale information specialists such as librarians and records managers. At Richmond the archivist can provide information about the holdings and assist researchers in finding the appropriate archives resources for their particular study topics. To learn more about the work of archivists visit the website of the [Association of Canadian Archivists](http://www.caad.ca).*



*Bill Purver and City Archivist Lynne Waller. Bill is working on a contract to process City records created prior to the establishment of the Uniform Classification and Retention System. He identifies links between some of the older City records and documents we create electronically on REDMS.*



*Ken Young, right, Manager of Records and Information.*



*Terra Dickson has been working in Clerks Records as Records and Information Management Analyst (RIMA) while Dovel Buie is on maternity leave. An archives graduate from UBC, Terra's work is to administer the records management system of the City of Richmond from paper to electronic records.*



A.R. MacNeill in 1945 when he was principal of Richmond High School.



General Currie School in 2004. The new one is at left and the heritage school at the right.



## “What’s in a Name?” - new Archives book wins award.

What better way to celebrate Richmond’s 125th anniversary in 2004 than by publishing a book of local history? To top this, the book has won a Richmond Heritage Commission award for a special heritage project.

This book on the naming of Richmond’s schools is the latest in the ongoing partnership between the volunteers of the Friends of the Richmond Archives and the City of Richmond Archives. “Richmond Schools - What’s in a Name? 125 Years of Change and Expansion” contains 95 photographs accompanying accounts of how each school in Richmond was named. Included are schools that have closed along with private and special purpose schools.

An indexed satellite map on the inside back cover was obtained from Radarsat International showing the location of Richmond schools, past and present.

The book is for sale at the Cultural Centre Information Desk and at the Archives. For more information telephone 231-6430.

### Who Uses the Archives?



May Wong, clerk in the Law Department of City Hall, is a frequent visitor to the Archives. The Law Department most often refers to some of the 5,500 Bylaw files in our holdings. A further 2,400 are in active use at City Hall. The Archives also keeps the legal originals of the Bylaws and microfilmed copies of the originals.



Richmond High School in 1953 before Minoru Boulevard was created. The old Brighthouse Lacrosse Box is at the right and Minoru Racetrack on the other side of Granville Street. City of Richmond Archives Photograph 1977 1 105



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[www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/about/about.htm](http://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/about/about.htm)

Public Reference Room Hours  
Monday - Thursday 9:00-4:30  
Appointment recommended