

THE HELICONIAN CLUB

CELEBRATION of 150 Years of HELICONIAN HALL

SAVE THE DATES!

March 2026 Newsletter

A bit of history...

On August 2nd, 1923, a special meeting of the Heliconian Club was called to propose the purchase of a small church at 35 Hazelton Avenue. When that motion passed, a frenzy of fundraising commenced to raise the \$2,000.00 required for the first payment. Utilizing various fundraising methods, the first payment was met and fundraising continued over the next eight years. In 1931, Club members paid off the mortgage and held a spectacular “Burning of the Mortgage” ceremony at their annual dinner on May 16, 1931.

By this time, the Village of Yorkville had been annexed to the City of Toronto and was growing rapidly. The area became predominantly residential dotted with small commercial enterprises. Buildings in the area were the Yorkville Town Hall with a tower, (renamed to St. Paul’s Hall), the Masonic Temple, the former Mount Sinai Hospital, (now Chanel), Jesse Ketchum Public School, the Red Lion Hotel and the Lennox Hotel, the Library, the Firehall, and opened in 1935, the newly built University Theatre presented **Mutiny on the Bounty**. The first tramcar (a tram with capacity for 8 – 10 people, pulled by horses) trotted up and down Yonge Street from Scollard Avenue to the St. Lawrence Market. This mode of transportation was, no doubt, a big help to Club members toting their art supplies, books and instruments to the Hall.

One cannot help but admire those early members, in their sturdy shoes, mid-length dresses, and hats, for their tenacity as stewards of the Hall and devotion to promoting the arts in Canada.

Read Mary Jane Warner’s essay about the history of the Heliconian Hall in the March **Bulletin**.

The 150 Celebrations Committee...

Chair: Marg Wilson, VP-150 Celebrations Planning

Angie Littlefield, Advisor, Stakeholder Management

Leslie McIntosh, Advisor, Writer

Mary Jane Warner, Writer, Archivist, Editor, Historian

Christine Arthurs, Communications

Velma Ko, Music Convenor

You might recall that in late 2024 and early 2025 ideas were solicited from members on how to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Hall. Great ideas were presented to the Board and decisions were made about events based on the strategic objectives of the Club. Specifically, to do more outreach to our arts partners and neighbours, strengthen the Club's image as a historic, welcoming cultural hub, increase our membership by demonstrating what the Club can offer, and, be financial viable.

Our Patrons...

We are very honoured to have two exceptional women leaders, well known in their respective fields, to act as Patrons for our 150 Celebrations. They will provide advice and assistance on our events and will celebrate our events with us.

Marilyn Lightstone

Marilyn Lightstone is a well-known Canadian icon with a prolific career as an actress,(who could forget Anne of Green Gables), on stage, in television and film, writer, director, producer, painter, and photographer. She has received many awards for her work, and was a huge hit at the Club's Jane Austen Tea Party last year reading from **Pride and Prejudice** in a British accent.

Councillor Dianne Saxe (University-Rosedale)

Dr. Dianne Saxe is one of Canada's most respected environmental and energy lawyers with decades of experience as a non-partisan expert and advocate for municipalities, businesses, non-profits, individuals and for the arts. Councillor Saxe has a keen interest in our Hall and we appreciate that she is highly protective of heritage sites. She has received numerous awards for her work, and has already helped the Heliconian Club navigate through red tape to receive some grant money for necessary work on the downstairs washrooms.

Save these dates...

Instead of one big event, the Board initially decided to have four events throughout the year in an effort to provide something of interest for every member and because the Hall has limit restrictions. The Committee started with four events and a small project which has now become a major event. **So, now we have five events to look forward to!** This approach has required numerous meetings with very different stakeholders, much discussion about details, and investigating legal and insurance requirements. However, the dates, times and basic concepts have been worked out so save these dates.

HC EVENT #1 In Partnership with the Ontario Art Gallery (AGO)

1.A. From March 7th for a six month run – this is an exhibition of 17 works by ten of the Heliconian past members represented in the AGO’s collections. The exhibition will open in a small gallery (**Trier Gallery**) and **adjacent corridor** on March 7th and run for about six months.

1.B April 10th, 2026 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. UNSHELVED

The Marvin Gelber Print and Drawing Study Centre, AGO

Convenors for The Heliconian Club:

Angie Littlefield, Leslie McIntosh, Rosemary Tannock, Mary Jane Warner

An amazing event and not to be missed! This is one of the periodic “*Unshelved*” AGO events where curators feature more artists and display a wider array of art and ephemera (photographs, catalogues, scrapbooks, etc.). These are works of Heliconian artists mostly born before the 1930’s.

It will be fascinating to see the subjects of the paintings and the mediums used. Mary Jane and Leslie are researching, (with the help of the interns) and preparing bios of all of the artists for viewing at the exhibitions.

What has been wonderful about the AGO events the AGO staff we have been working with, Cecily Anne Field Ph.D., Research and Collections Coordinator, and Camille McDayter, Acting Special Collections Archivist, Library and Archives, are as excited about our past Heliconian artists and their work as we are.

HC EVENT #2 OPENING CEREMONY

May 16th, 2026 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

On Hazelton Avenue, the Lane, and in the Hall

Convenors for the Heliconian Club:

Marg Wilson, Angie Littlefield, Velma Ko

A number of details are still in play but this event promises to be lots of fun. A Town Crier will be announcing the 150th anniversary to members, stakeholders and neighbours congregated on the street and lane. Club musicians will be entertaining from a small stage in our courtyard. Then the Town Crier will lead us into the Hall. There will be some congratulatory speeches followed by entertainment of past hits and new works from Club members. At the end of the entertainment will be a cutting of the anniversary cake and lemonade for all, and time to

socialize perhaps with previous Club members who have moved away and decided to visit to celebrate the day. More details to follow in future 150 Celebrations Newsletters.

HC EVENT #3 MAY 16th, 2026 – HELICONIAN HALL EVENING EVENT

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. At Heliconian Hall

Convenors for the Club: Angie Littlefield, Velma Ko, Leslie McIntosh, Marg Wilson

This event is for Club members, Heliconian Foundation members, donors and invited guests. After speeches, the entertainment program will highlight the skills and talents from Club members, including a grand finale, and there will be a surprise or two. Snacks will be available and a glass of bubbly to celebrate will also be available. More details to come in future 150 Newsletters.

HC EVENT #4 CHILDREN’S FESTIVAL WORKSHOPS

**1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. At Heliconian Hall (for students at Jesse Ketchum School)
June 20th, 2026**

Convenors for the Club: Leslie McIntosh, Angie Littlefield, Rosemary Tannock

The Convenors and myself have been meeting with the Acting Principal and three very keen teachers from Jesse Ketchum School to discuss educational and fun ways to engage the students, and because we have so much fun at our Heliconians at Play and Ephraskis events, we all thought an Ekphrasis could be an interesting learning and fun experience. This is a two part event.

4.1 Children’s Art Show

An art teacher at Jesse Ketchum will organize an art workshop in April at the school and students will create small pieces of art based on the following themes:

- The First Nations of the Land on which we stand. What would they be doing on a typical day 150 years ago
- Walking alone the Davenport Trail/Gete-Onigaming past and present
- Women and girls making art, long ago and now
- A portrait of Heliconian Hall or Happy Birthday Heliconian Hall.

4.2 Jesse Ketchum Epkhraskis

On June 20th, (Time to be determined), students from Jesse Ketchum will attend workshops, (music-voice and instrumental,dance, writing, art, led by Club members) in the Hall culminating in an Epkhraskis performance which will be filmed. The day will end with an ice-cream truck for children and adults.

Convenors of this event are Leslie McIntosh, Angie Littlefield and Rosemary Tannock.

For this event to be successful, it will require a significant number of Club volunteers so if you would like to be involved in the Children’s Festival Workshops, please let one of the Convenors know asap.

HC EVENT #5 THE 150th ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

November 20th, 2026 At Heliconian Hall (Tickets-Price to be Determined)

6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

To end the year of celebrations, a sit-down gala dinner, followed by entertainment, will be held at the Club on November 20th, 2026. We will be thanking our Patrons, donors, and active event stakeholders for celebrating the year with us. Members and donors will be receiving a Legacy Booklet capturing all the events of the 150 Celebrations year.

So save the dates and plan to celebrate together...

Please mark these dates, times, places, and events in your calendars: **April 10th, May 16th, June 20, and November 20th!**

And that’s not all... watch for the next 150 Celebrations Newsletter which will be about the 150 Exhibits in the Hall. Please take one of the fundraising folders at the Club and consider donating to the celebrations and/or volunteering to help with the events.

This is our year to celebrate our distinguished and beautiful Heliconian Hall. If you have any suggestions or questions, do not hesitate to contact anyone on the 150 Committee or myself.

Marg Wilson
VP – 150 Celebrations