

The Eighty - Three 'ORIGINS'

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Area 83 Archives Newsletter

AREA 83 ARCHIVES March 2019

Inside this issue:

From our Area 83
Archivist 1

FROM THE VAULTS 2
A.A.'s origin in
Toronto & Canada

Group History of
Twelve Steps Group 3

Area 83 4
District Origins

Of Special Interest

From the Chair:

- The 14th Annual Area 83 Archives Workshop "Learning Session" will be held in Kingston ON, Saturday May 25, 2019.
- Included is a free tour of Queen's University Archives.
- Flyer / Agenda coming soon.

Area 83 Archives Chair:
Marty M.

Area 83 Archivist:
Linda McQ.

Contributions to "The Eighty Three" should be sent to:
archivist@area83aa.org

So You Want To Be an Archivist?

Whether you are an amateur historian, collector or detective, working in Archives is for you. Archives itself is 12 step work. It is our way of showing gratitude to those who came before us, and our means to carry AA's message into the future.

We do this by collecting, preserving, and providing access to our history; by recording the growth of Area 83/districts/groups; through group histories, interviews with our Long-timers; and by researching and mining our Area's decisions and actions for the guidance of AA in our Area. Archives aids all of us, in setting the direction for our future, and provides valuable insight into our successes and errors.

What Do I have to Do?

First off, keep in mind we work by the archives ethics. We maintain the intellectual integrity of the archives, by providing responsible custodianship, security and access. Of key importance - we protect the anonymity of our members. So do some reading. Download a free copy of the Archives Workbook from www.aa.org. It contains all the information you need to get started.

What does an Archivist Do?

An archivist:

Collects

For example, Minutes of meetings, Flyers (Roundup), Roundup agendas, Anniversary Announcements, District and Group Histories, Committee History (i.e. Treatment, Corrections, CPC, etc.), Oral Histories, First Edition Program Books/Leaflets/Meeting Listings, Recovery documentation from district facilities, News Clippings, photos.

Stores

You will need to decide where to store this information. The main concern is dampness, and humidity, so at home, avoid garages and basements. Perhaps a local church can provide space, or a local archival association/historical society can assist.

Organizes and Classifies

Request minutes of meetings from district/groups, and ask members what's out there in terms of collectibles. Once received the task will be to organize, categorize each item, and of importance, then classify each item. Will this item be open to all, open to AA, open with approval, or off limits for now. You will need to store these items in appropriate storage containers.

Preserves

Remove clips and staples, and clean and repair the pages. Store papers in acid free storage containers or large plastic bins, and use acid-free plastic page protectors.

Displays

Prepare a traveling display. If on a limited budget, simple displays can be made using three part cardboard sold at Staples or Business Depot. In creating, determine the focus of your display, and provide an example of the content of your archives.

What Support is there for the Archivist?

The General Service Office (GSO) provides a free copy of a number of archives booklets available at WWW.AA.org. Area 83 provides forms for Interviews, Group History, Deed of Gift, and *The Eighty-Three Archives Newsletters*. The Area Archives Chair, the Area Archivist, and your fellow Archivists in Area 83 hold two training workshops each year.

Other resources include any Local Archives/Historians for example university, city, or small town archives will be happy to help and advise. There are also some free courses on Archives online (search "free online archives courses"). In addition, most colleges offer archives courses.

Working in Archives we learn about our past, so that we can share with the future.

If any of this sounds interesting to you.....

Welcome
You are no longer alone

Historical excerpts from a six page letter written in 1956

HISTORY OF A.A. IN TORONTO

When Mac H called and asked me to give a 20 minute talk on A.A. history, in Toronto, I agreed without realizing what a difficult chore I was taking on. There are very few notes or reliable records that I have been able to find and old timers I have talked with rely only on memory. So, with nothing more reliable to go on, there is bound to be a variety of opinions on matters, which, if they had been properly recorded, would have been facts and not matters of opinion. However, I have attempted to put the record as straight as I can with any information I could gather from others, adding this to what my own memory holds of events - since I joined A.A. on May 16th, 1945.

Bill W., our founder, found his sobriety in 1934. After many trials and disappointments, Dr. Bob became sober in 1935 through Bill's help. It was their good fortune to claim a third success fairly soon and by 1939 the new movement could boast of about 100 members in Akron, Cleveland and New York, Bill had written the Big Book and in naming it, a name was found for the fledgling fellowship that has since reached world-wide proportions.

Rev. Percy G. Price, M.A., who had returned from a missionary field in Japan in 1940, was appalled by the drunkenness he found in Toronto, and, as assistant pastor of Metropolitan Church, he was doing what he could to help the victims in that area. In 1942, he was given a big A.A. book by Dr. Little and he began suggesting these A.A. principles to alcoholics needing help. It was Rev. Price who suggested that a "group" of alcoholics - and those interested in alcoholism - be brought together.

The result of this suggestion was a dinner meeting on January 13th, 1943, at Little Denmark Restaurant in Toronto. This first dinner meeting was attended by Dr. Little, Rev. Percy Price and six alcoholics. One week later, another meeting was held in the same place. Rev. Price then arranged facilities in Metropolitan Church house where a 6 o'clock dinner (and what many would describe as the first "organized" A.A. meeting in Toronto) was held.

The date of this meeting was January 28, 1943, and 6 people were present. Weekly supper meetings were held from that date. On February 15th, 1943, 15 attended the meeting and the first woman member attended. March 18th, 12 attended, including 2 women. April 15th Rev. Percy and Mrs. Price entertained 20 persons at a dinner meeting in their apartment.

There are now 55 meetings held every week - as listed in the directory. This does not include the meetings held in institutions, nor special meetings - such as the grand meeting last Sunday afternoon at the Royal York Hotel - when 6 to 700 were present.

Such is the story of AA in Toronto and Central Ontario as has been told to me, and as I remember it.

Talk given at 10th Anniversary Meeting, North Toronto Group, November 6, 1956. - EARL M
(MAY 16 1945 ORY DATE)

Twelve Steps Group, Toronto

I'd like to tell you a little about the customs of the group which have developed over the years. In the early years, one of the members went over to England for the Christmas season where she went to some AA meetings. She came back with an enthusiastic report about a special meeting she had been to. The people, she reported, sat around the tables like an ordinary discussion group except that they had lighted candles and finger food. The members shared with each other about the kind of year they had and the good things AA had brought into their lives. You will recognize this as a candlelight meeting! She encouraged the members of the Twelve Steps group to try such a meeting at Christmas and the rest, as they say, is history. Thus the Candlelight meeting came to Toronto with the first one at Twelve Steps.

As well, the Twelve Steps group usually has the first Candlelight of the season and has a custom of inviting the minister to attend the meeting and address the group. Over the years this has worked out very well.

The group developed a policy early on of presenting a gift copy of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* to newcomers with six months of sobriety. This practice has fallen out of use which is regrettable since the newcomers really looked forward to getting the gift copy.

Another unique feature of the group is that in keeping with the name of the group someone shares his or her experience with a Step during the open meeting. The group rotates through the Steps with a different one each week. For medallions, the recipient chooses the Step.

Chips are presented for every month of the first year. In 2007, Ainsley G. made a long, solid, white wooden container to hold the chips. Newcomers and long-timers alike love this innovation.

A few years ago, the group had an issue over who does the clean-up following medallions so it was decided by group conscience that we would serve pizza and cake at meetings with nothing else. This makes clean-up easier and has proved to be very popular in the group so the Twelve Steps group is now the *Pizza and Cake* group!

Another feature of the group is the extensive library which includes a large variety of AA and Hazelden literature.

Like any group the Twelve Steps has had its share of controversy and I'll share a couple of those with you now. One of the incidents had more far-reaching consequences than the other.

In the mid-1990s a couple of members made a motion to have the group become non-smoking. This resulted in a rancorous business meeting which was attended by every smoker in the group even those who had never attended a business meeting in their lives. Normally, the group holds its business meeting in a little room off to the side and gets a fairly good turnout. For the smoking motion, however, the meeting had to be held in the main meeting room. I recall it vividly – the discussion was loud and long and the motion was soundly defeated. Nevertheless, the non-smokers had the last laugh because shortly after the church mandated a non-smoking policy. If nothing else, this incident demonstrated that members will come out to business meetings if properly motivated!

A more serious disagreement occurred on Wednesday, June 19, 2002. The dispute which led to the formation of a spin-off group began at the Twelve Steps business meeting on Wednesday, June 19, 2002. At the previous May business meeting, a motion to change the wording of *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* to make it gender-neutral (changing 'any man' to 'any one' and 'drives men mad' to 'drives us mad') had been passed. At the June meeting, a member declared that he was now opposed to the changed wording and made a motion to return to the original wording. His motion was defeated, but the member said he would raise the issue every month until he was successful. This angered several members causing one or two to storm out of the business meeting. Ironically, the wording was left as the gender-neutral version that is read today, but several members left the group over the issue.

Six members who left started the Birchcliffe group with an open meeting format in October, 2002. In mid-2003, the group was disbanded and five of the members eventually returned to the Twelve Steps Group; two of the members moved away but three members are active in the group to this day.

Around 1990, Frank P and three or four other members of Twelve Steps started a discussion group. It was held in the chapel across the lane just south of the main meeting hall. After a period of time, the meeting was allowed to lapse although technically it was still in operation. A few years later it was resurrected by Scott B. and a few other members of the Twelve Steps Group. The format was changed to exclusively a Step meeting and eventually it was moved to Scarborough Baptist Church and renamed the Lakeside Discussion Group. This discussion group began in early 2005 and was dissolved on January 1, 2009.

Following another false start, the group started its current discussion meeting in May, 2011. The meeting is held on the stage above the main meeting room at 6:45 p.m. every Wednesday and has a devoted following. Finally, the Twelve Steps group has a successful discussion meeting!

Open meetings of the group have always been held on Wednesdays in two different locations over the years. At its inception the meetings were held at Kingston Road United Church but in 1975 the group moved to Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church, on the corner of Kingston Road and Wood Glen Road between Victoria Park Avenue and Warden Avenue.

The meetings are almost always held in the main church basement hall although there was a time several years ago when the meetings were moved in July and August to what the group referred to as "the summer home" across the lane while the Boy Scouts occupied the church basement. There have also been a few occasions when the group held successful outdoor meetings! Unfortunately, Montessori has since purchased the chapel across the lane so we no longer have access to it.

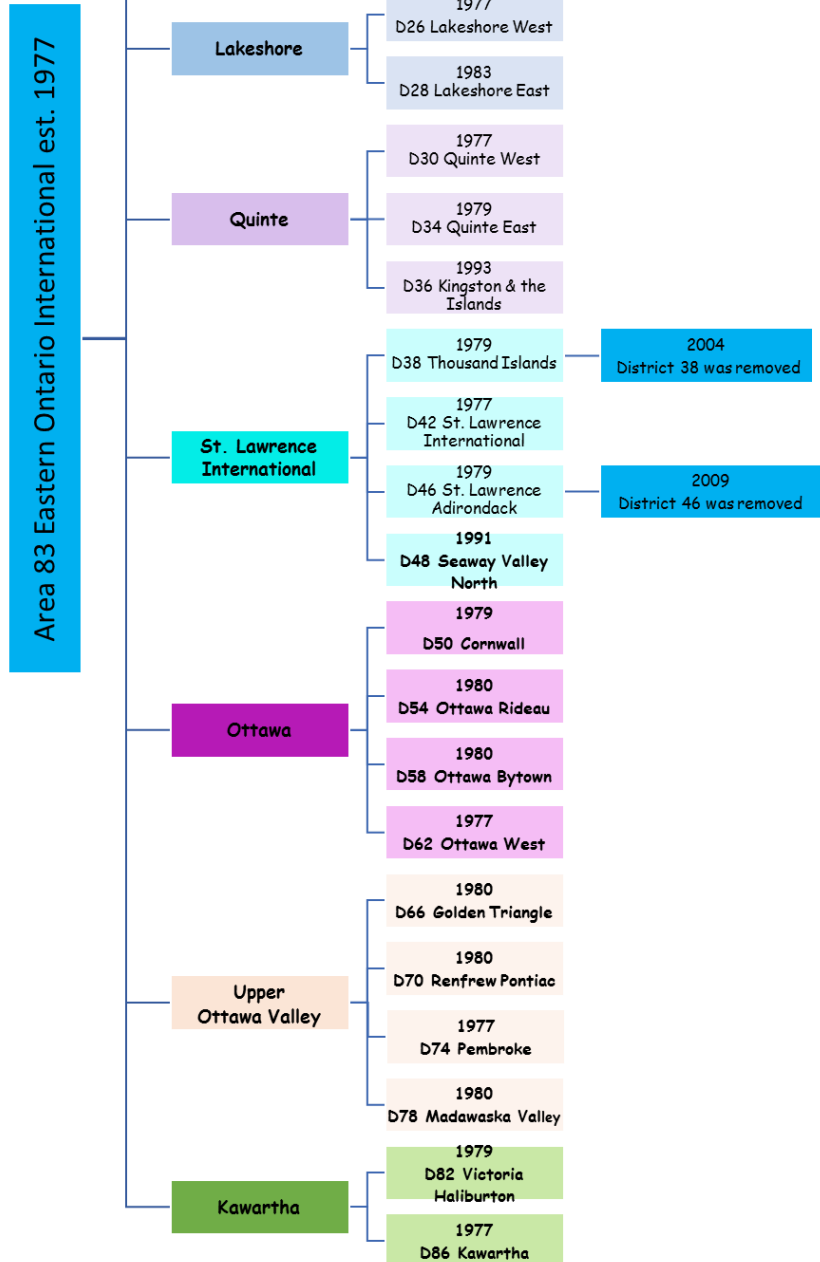
Well, that is it for this brief history of the Twelve Steps group. I hope you have enjoyed reading our story!

This group history is on file at the GTA Archives

Look How We Have Grown!

The Evolution of Districts in Area 83

From the beginning of Area 83 Eastern Ontario International in 1977 through 1978, there were ten districts. These districts were not numbered back then, rather they were named by their regions. Much like a family tree, this shows when the regions formed into the 25 districts we know today.



Area 83 Size

Perimeter: 1, 580 km

Area: 63, 288 km²