

## WHAT IS ARTS BURLINGTON?

First a little history of Arts Burlington –

- in 1958 the Burlington weavers formed a guild (1st weaving classes in Burlington were in 1954 through the Recreation Dept.)
- in 1965 Burlington Guild of Artists was formed
- in 1966 Burlington Fine Arts was organized
- in 1968 the Hooking Guild was formed
- in 1969 the Potters Guild was formed.

These groups had temporary locations throughout Burlington, moving from one location to another depending on availability of space. The locations included various members' homes, local high schools, the arena, churches, The Maples on New St. and The Pines on Guelph Line.

In 1970, the Dept. of Recreation Services, realizing the inadequacy of the premises they were able to offer to the art and craft guilds, organized a weekend seminar, attended by representatives from each group, to discuss the needs of the creative arts in Burlington. As a result a Research Committee was formed.

In 1971 the Research Committee presented a brief to the Recreation Committee of Council outlining the need for an Art and Craft Centre. The Recreation Committee proposed that an Advisory Committee be formed to suggest a site and work out the cost of such a Centre.

In February 1972, the Advisory Committee made a presentation to the Recreation Committee of Council for a proposed building but was soon advised that there were no funds in the Capital Budget for the Art & Craft Centre.

In March 1972 Arts Burlington was formed as an umbrella group. The guilds were determined to carry on with their goal of a facility for arts and crafts in the community. They also indicated that they were open to other guilds to join.

In May 1972 the first Kaleidoscope was held at the arena with 250 artists and craftsmen exhibiting and 3000 attendees and it has been held annually since.

In 1973/74 planning continued for establishment of a centre with talks between the Research Committee and the City of Burlington. The Public Service Dept. was requested to pay ½ of an architect's fee for a feasibility study and the City agreed, naming the architect and requesting that the expansion of the Joseph Brant Museum be included in the plan. They also agreed to pay half of the 1.2 million estimated cost of the Centre.

In May 1974 Arts Burlington established a Steering Committee to work on site, administration and operation, promotion and fund raising.

In December 1974 the Museum Board decided to withdraw from the plan and Arts Burlington decided to carry on alone and a new plan for the building was proposed.

Arts Burlington committed to raising 1/3 of the required funds from the people of Burlington to build the Centre and the fund raising team raised more than \$400,000 with the rest of the funds coming from the City and Wintario grants. Events were held to raise funds, including the first Art Auction in October 1975 at the Reimer complex (500 people attended and \$9,000 was raised), Book Sales, etc. and the team appealed to many corporations and individuals for funds.

Also in 1974 Latow (which was formed in 1971), and the Sculptors and Woodcarvers joined Arts Burlington.

In 1975 The Burlington Cultural Centre was incorporated with an initial Board of 9 directors chosen by the Steering Committee and a grant was received from the Provincial Government to have an architect draw up plans for a building to be located in Brock Park.

In 1976 a fund-raising Chairman was appointed (Tom Sutherland), the architect built a scale model of the Cultural Centre and a Director was hired (David Nasby). This was also the year that the Hooking Guild joined Arts Burlington and the BCC became a member of the Ontario Association of Art Galleries.

In January 1977, three city representatives were appointed to the Board and in February a contract was awarded to build the Centre and a sod turning ceremony was held in June.

In July of that year the Burlington Cultural Centre office was moved from temporary quarters in the Mohawk Canoe Club to a Storefront Gallery in Upper Canada Place that housed an office, board room and a display area where monthly exhibitions of Art were shown. The first exhibition featured artist Ken Danby.

In April 1978 staff moved into the BCC and it was opened to the public on June 3, 1978 with a week-long celebration. The first exhibition in the Main gallery was comprised of 75 works from the homes of Burlington collectors entitled "Burlington Community Collects". In the summer of that year the first courses at the Centre were held and the first Art Market was in September. By 1979 the Centre had Art Rental, a shop, and a library. There was also an Art column in the Burlington Gazette by Lois Crawford where the BCC got regular coverage.

In July 1978 the Hayden Davies aluminum sculpture “Space Composition for Rebecca” was installed on the Lakeshore in front of the Centre.

In July 1980 the small gallery in the Cultural Centre was named the Perry Gallery in honour of Bob Perry who had chaired the original research committee and steering committee and was also the first President of the Board of the BCC when it opened in 1978.

Jonathan Smith was the first Burlington artist to have a one-man exhibition in the main gallery opening on February 8, 1979.

In 1981 Ted Pietrzak was hired as Director of the Burlington Cultural Centre and in 1982 Arts Burlington became a Registered Charity.

An acquisition Policy was adopted in 1983 by the Centre Board for the collection of Ceramics for a permanent collection.

In 1992 Ian Ross was hired as the Director and in 1993 the name change occurred – from the Burlington Cultural Centre to the Burlington Art Centre.

There have been two additions to the building – the first being in 1991 when 3,000 sq. ft. was added including two studios on a second floor (for the hooking guild and potters) and a second much larger addition in 2001.

A Partnership Agreement between the BAC and Arts Burlington was signed effective January 1, 2003 which transferred Arts Burlington’s two main fundraisers (Art Auction and Art Market) to the BAC with the proviso that Arts Burlington would provide volunteers for the events.

In May 2014 the BAC was renamed Art Gallery of Burlington.

Robert Steven was hired in May 2015 as President and CEO of the AGB.

The Fibre Arts Guild joined Arts Burlington in June 2015.

In March 2018 a new Partnership Agreement was signed between the Art Gallery of Burlington and Arts Burlington.

Arts Burlington still exists today and its purpose is to co-ordinate the guilds’ activities within the AGB.

Its mission reads –

Guilds and Associations working together to enhance and enrich life in our community through art and crafts.

Its objectives –

- Provide a structured means of communication between the guilds and the AGB.
- Provide a means by which the Guilds can share information among themselves, which will encourage their development, growth and their responsibility to the AGB.

As you can see, it is very important that we support Arts Burlington. We are Arts Burlington – the members of the guilds collectively make up Arts Burlington. We established the Burlington Cultural Centre and although it has evolved and is now the AGB and includes other than Guild studios – Gift Shop, ceramics collection, courses, etc., we, the guilds, are the main stakeholders in the building. It is still important that we have this umbrella group called “Arts Burlington” to speak for us collectively in our dealings with the AGB administration.

Hope this clears up the questions that particularly new members have regarding “what is Arts Burlington?”

S. Stafford  
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