

YESTERDAY

News from the Tavistock and District Historical Society

VOLUME 6

SPRING 2007



A LOOK AT TAVISTOCK IN 1878

Join us for our Annual General Meeting on Saturday, March 31, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.

**Tavistock & District
Historical Society Inc.**

Executive:

Chair: Ed Pellow
Vice-Chair: Sherrill Calder
Secretary: Mary Nicklas
Treasurer: Bob Rudy

Directors:

Paul Bartlett
Roy Erb
Bill Gladding
Bruce Halliday
Joyce Hill
Barb Matthes
Blain McCutchen
Ron Saunders

Chairman's Message

2006 was a very successful and busy year for our Historical Society. The displays were changed every month or two and were very well received by everyone. Over 600 members, guests, organizations, clubs and school classes from our local area and visitors from afar visited our Museum and Archives to reminisce and gather information of the area's past. Our displays were made up of our own collected items and a great many items loaned to us by many residents of the area. We have a very energetic line up of displays for 2007. (see calendar enclosed for 2007 display themes.)

We have also been very busy with many projects which include the collecting of historical data from Tavistock and area. The Archives have many census, cemetery records, family histories, photos from the Lemp collection, scrapbooks, Veteran records, photos and much more local information. Our Oral History Library is growing with DVDs of local interviews with individuals who have much knowledge of our history. The committee has plans to expand this Library including many historical facts and information from individuals and corporations. The Year of the Veteran project has turned out to be a much larger undertaking than first visualized. It has now extended into its second year of collecting names, data and photos from families and friends of Veterans of the Boer, First & Second World Wars and other conflicts in which our Canadian Veterans were involved. We have produced a DVD of their photos and names and will soon update it to include over 350 Veterans. We are now in the process of compiling several books as a permanent record for our Archives including photos, written records and names of over 500 Veterans.



Millinery items now on display

The Lemp collection of over 4,000 glass negatives of photos of area interest are being scanned into a computer and developed into books for our records. This is a very large job and the results are excellent. This will take a great deal of work and time to complete, however it is a very worthwhile project, showing much of the area history in photos. All of the material from many of our projects will be available for your viewing as we complete and add them to our collection.

I would like to thank everyone who supported our projects and to those who joined as members and loaned us many items for our displays. My thanks to the volunteers without whom we could not operate. The countless hours spent setting up and taking down displays and working on the projects cannot be counted. We recognize everyone's contribution of time. A special thanks to the Rotary Club of Tavistock and the East Zorra-Tavistock Council for their continuing support and to the many individuals who provided financial donations. My thanks to the Board Members for their hard work and support during the past year.

We invite everyone to our Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 31st at 1:00 pm in the Library Hall. Our theme for this year is "A Trip Back in Time". Please join us and hear and see what Tavistock and District consisted of in 1878 and how the area has developed.

Ed Pellow, Chairman

Tavistock & District Historical Society Inc.

37 Maria Street,
Box 280,
Tavistock, Ontario,
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**MUSEUM
HOURS:**
Saturdays
10am-12 noon

Other times
by appointment

Honouring Our Veterans

An invitation is extended to all our veterans, their families and friends to view their pictures and information researched and collected during our Year of the Veteran Project. Every Saturday morning between 10 am and 12 pm noon, beginning October 27th until November 17, 2007, the Tavistock & District Historical Society will be presenting the archival information of our Veterans.

Susan J. Pellow,
Year of the Veteran committee Chair

MUSEUM CALENDAR:

March 3 – April 28
Tavistock – A Trip
Back In Time

May 5 – June 30
Quilts Galore

July 7 – August 25
Strike Up The Band!
Tavistock's Tattoos

Sept. 1 – October 20
Land of Milk,
Cheese and Honey

October 27 – Nov. 17
Honouring Our Veterans

Nov. 24 – Jan 5/08
Bless This House –
Our Churches

Speaker Series

June 20, 2007
(to be announced)

Annual General Meeting

March 31, 2007
Tavistock – A Trip
Back In Time

Tavistock's Village Smithy

Michael McDermott - 1847-1927

When he was one year old, he came to Canada with his family from their native Ireland. He lived in Haysville and New Hamburg and, in 1888, moved his young family to Tavistock. During his working life he was a policeman, carriage maker, farrier, blacksmith, and, in partnership with his sons, operated a car dealership. At age 71, he could still broad jump the diameter of the hind wheel of a wagon. Michael McDermott had an interesting life.

In 1874 he married Tammy Lake in Chesterfield. Together they raised 9 children: 6 girls - Mary, Annie, Ida, Nellie, Florence and Violet and 3 boys - Norman, Frank and Stanley.

At their 50th wedding anniversary in 1924 the Tavistock Gazette wrote: "Mr. and Mrs. McDermott have always contributed their very best toward the life of the town and have always exerted an influence for good and identified themselves with every effort for the promotion of the best interests of the community. Of them it can be said that Tavistock has been bettered because of their citizenship."

The McDermott legacy lives on in their descendants and, perhaps most visibly, at McDermott Motors on Hope Street, the site of Michael's blacksmith shop.



Michael McDermott, 1847-1927

Museum Themes

Our monthly displays feature items related to the theme as well as artifacts from the Historical Society's permanent collection of Tavistock and area memorabilia.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TAVISTOCK GAZETTE



McDermott Motors, 41 Hope Street East, Tavistock prior to demolition in 1983. Michael's great grandson Ron McDermott and grandson, the late Stan McDermott (Ron's father), are seen in the doorway.

The Flax Industry in Tavistock

Ontario was Canada's leading producer of flax in the late nineteenth century and Tavistock was right in the centre of that industry in Ontario. Josh McFadyen, a PhD candidate at the University of Guelph, gave a fascinating presentation about flax to members and interested guests of the TDHS in January. It was part of the speaker series programme.

The parts of the flax plant that are important to industry are the seeds of the plant (found in the flower) and the long, tough fibres found deep in the stem and the root. The word flax comes from the German "flachs" which in turn is derived from "pluk" meaning "stripping of fibre." The Latin word for flax is "linum" from which a host of English words are derived including line (as in thread), lineage, linseed, linoleum, linen, and lingerie.

The fibres of the flax plant are used in the furniture industry as upholstery and in the fabric industry for cord, cloth, and sails. The oil from the seeds, "linseed oil" is used in the construction industry in paints and in surface coverings.

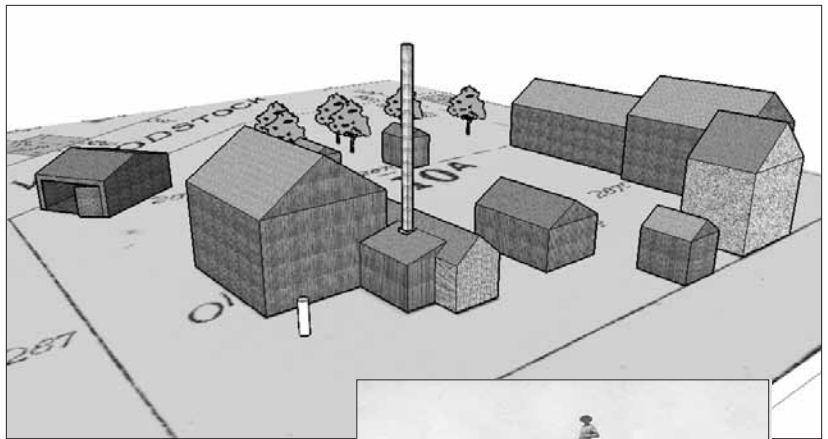
Josh described step-by-step the processes involved in growing flax. It is harvested by hand by "pulling," then transported to the mill where the seeds are separated from the stalk. The stalks are then transported back to the fields where they are allowed to rot or "ret." The flax is then collected for a third time and brought back to the mill to be "skutched" (threshed by blades to separate the fibres from their covering).

A wide variety of peoples and personalities were involved in the industry including the businessmen owners of the mills, the millers, the land owner farmers, and the labourers who did the back-breaking job of harvesting the flax. This last group was of particular interest to Josh because the owners hired migrant

workers, in this case highly specialized native Canadians. Mr. McFadyen entitled his talk "Flax in Tavistock: An Unlikely Crossroads in Culture."

Josh traced the economic story of flax in Ontario through the nineteenth and early twentieth century. He credited much of his information on flax to the papers written by Tavistock native F. W. Stock at the University of Guelph in 1921.

A video recording of his presentation and copies of his illustrations and graphs are available for viewing at the Tavistock archives.



Above, a 3-D view of the Tavistock Flax Mill created from a fire insurance map by Josh McFadyen.



At right, bringing a load of flax to the mill (from F.W. Stock, O.A.C., 1921)

rec-
ance
Josh



School Days

Reading, writing and arithmetic

Do you remember your first pencil case and how you carefully printed your name on the bottom? The feeling of pride when your artwork was chosen for display? That sinking feeling when the teacher asked you a question and you hadn't done your homework? Those were just some of the memories that the "School Days" display evoked. From January 20 - February 24 the museum was transformed into a one-room schoolhouse, typical of the many "SS's" in this area that are no more. From slates to honey "lunch" pails to entrance exams to the Union Jack and even a "School Days" DVD, the school display was a winner with the many people who toured through.

If your photo album includes class pictures or other photos from your school days (perhaps field day or your class marching in the Fall Fair parade) we would very much like to have a copy for our archives.