

Tudor and Cashel host Historical Society Lunch and Learn



By Michael Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tudor and Cashel Township held a Lunch and Learn at their community centre on Nov. 26, where the township's Historical Society presented to attendees on how Tudor and Cashel came to be through time. Made possible by the Ontario Seniors Accessibility Grant, there was also a hot lunch of soup, sandwiches and dessert provided by Wattle and Daub Café. Councillor Elain Holloway comments on this look back into Tudor and Cashel's past to Bancroft This Week. The Lunch and Learn on Nov. 26 was facilitated by the Tudor and Cashel Historical Society's Bob Clarke, Marie Whittaker and Gina Sikama, although Sikama was unable to attend due to another commitment, but sent her regards. Holloway told the crowd that they were an amateur historical society and what they know and what they found out they collected themselves through research and conversations through their lives here over the decades. "Their hope is to encourage you to become more involved, if not with the township's history but with that of your own families. There's a history that goes away if you don't have that history and hang on to it," she says. Clarke said that there was so much history and so much had changed over the past 175 years and that as they go through it, hopefully they'll answer some of the attendees' questions. "We're just going to skim the surface today. If there's an interest in another one of these presentations that deals with logging or mining, we'll certainly give it an effort to do that," he says. Clarke told Bancroft This Week back in 2020 in the Bancroft This Week article "Tudor and Cashel's history illuminates residents' souls," that they'd gotten the idea to pursue the historical society from the history section on the township's website in 2017, as resident Joan Donaldson had preserved quite a bit of the area's history. "The history of the area here is quite a story, going back to the 1850s. A lot of the older folks are passing and their stories are going to be lost and have been lost. But there's a lot of their siblings and relatives in the area so that that history can still be preserved. So basically, we live here on the Heritage Trail and the old hotel which used to be called Rickett's Hotel and the railroad went right by and the station was out front of the place. Well, the history kind of grows on you and I started collecting a bit of information on the railroad and then it kind of snowballed," he said at the time. On Nov. 26, Holloway presented what Sikama would have said that day, based on some notes provided, called "where it began to now," going from Upper Canada to the establishment of Canada in 1867, and from the initial farming that didn't pan out too well, to mining and logging that sustained Tudor and Cashel over the years. "Today, people travel to Bancroft to Belleville to Trenton and points in between to make a living. They could work closer to home but they don't and this is their home. It's where they want to live, hunt and fish. The lumber industry will continue, mine exploration, and maybe someday land will be cleared and farmed again using new machinery and technology. Whatever the occupation, families live in Tudor and Cashel because their roots are here and because the rocks, trees, wetlands and lakes draw their heart strings," she says. Whittaker went next, giving the crowd a taste of what it was like toward the end of the farming era (1850 to 1950) and what family life was like, based upon her own personal experiences. She said life was never dull and there was always something to do. She recalled many memories of life on the Ridge at her family's farms. "I have vague memories of using coal oil lamps in my Uncle George's house. I'm not sure when the hydro came to the Ridge, but it was quite an event when the telephones came in. Each house got their own ring and very little privacy," she says. Clarke finished off the presentation by looking

at the early settlers to Tudor and Cashel and the reasons why they came and persevered in the area, like free 50 to 100 acre lots, hope for a better life, and the logging and mining industries. He then looked at the histories of Tudor Township, established in 1865 and Cashel Township, established in 1869 before they amalgamated in 1897 and the history of Tudor and Cashel since then. For instance, Clarke talked about the history of the Central Ontario Railroad and the effect it had on Tudor and Cashel, initially transporting iron ore and later logs through the area, and the effect that the building of Hwy 62 had on the railroad traffic over time, until the last train came through in 1975 and the tracks were removed in 1980. Clarke concluded by saying that there's just so many stories they could spend days telling folks what they've been able to pull together from various sources over the years. "We're going to try to come up with some way to preserve this for the next generation. Most people really aren't that interested in it until later in life when they think 'oh, wonder what that was all about?'" he says. Clarke told Bancroft This Week that he hoped the presentation answered a few questions for people in attendance and that it was just interesting. "What we're trying to do is get an interest in this just so that this stuff preserves. We're even doing a book that's in the editing stages but it just skims off the top of what we could put in it and if there's interest we could do more. It's to get the next generation thinking 'okay, we'll carry on with this,'" he says. Holloway told Bancroft This Week that the Historical Society Lunch and Learn was the best attended, drawing residents including those from neighbouring townships. "The presentation was excellent, very informative giving a glimpse at how Tudor and Cashel came to be. I believe the participants were equally captivated, evident with their interaction and comments, leaving wanting to learn even more. There is so much more yet to share and Bob Clarke, Marie Whittaker and Gina Sikama are eager to come again. The Ontario Seniors Accessibility Grant has provided excellent opportunities for our residents, reducing isolation and encouraging ongoing participation," she says. "It was an excellent presentation."