

Wollaston Heritage Committee plans for summer season]



By Mike Riley

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The Wollaston Heritage Committee had two meetings a couple of weeks ago to begin planning for their summer season, according to a Facebook post from April 20. The committee plans to expand the current heritage offerings that Wollaston has in place on the ten acres parcel they have at 16 Centre Street in downtown Coe Hill, to display their farming, lumber and mining heritage. Business owner Gary Pattison, and Wollaston Township Councillors Sheila Currie and Wendy Mortimer comment on these meetings.

Established in 2007, the Wollaston Heritage Centre is located at 16 Centre St. in Coe Hill. It is incorporated and has charitable status. It is dedicated to preserving the heritage of Wollaston Township, including Coe Hill's history as an iron ore mining town in the 19th century. According to their website at www.wollastonheritagecentre.com, other artifacts will show a one room school, a homeopathic doctor's office, a blacksmith shop, logging, farming and railroad equipment, and other items they have in storage.

Pattison, who owns and operates the Old Hastings Mercantile and Gallery in Ormsby (in adjacent Limerick Township) with his wife Lillian, says that the meeting was to make the people from Hastings County more aware of the heritage centre in Wollaston and to let them know what their plans for the future are and what funding is needed.

?One of the projects is to utilize the outdoor acreage and to make that happen a major fence is needed to protect the public from the heritage mine shaft. Apparently, it may cost something like \$69,000 but I'm not entirely sure of that. There was a second meeting the next day with just members of the committee discussions centred around when we would open for the summer and what had to be organized before that happened,? he says.

According to an April 27 online posting from Pattison, on the Old Hastings Mercantile and Gallery Facebook page, the committee had acquired a few more of the books created by the heritage committee and Edith McCaw, including Memories of the Lives of our Pioneers (2011), Memories: More from our Past, and Memories of our Military Men and Women (both 2014).

?Along with interview, poems, and short stories gathered from local seniors by Edith, more interviews conducted by our Coe Hill Public School children back in 1973 were discovered and used. There are some fascinating bits of information, he says in this posting.

Some of this information, according to Pattison's post, includes the original fire hall built back in the early 1970s with many fundraisers and volunteer contributions and was worth about \$30,000 in 1975 dollars, about \$168,000 today adjusted for inflation, a photo of Aileen Ingram at the hardware store, a reference to [Pattison's] great-great uncle William Pattison, who died in a fire trying to save two young boys on The Ridge, an interview with local legend Bill O'Brian, and an interview and photo of Pearl (McCaw) Greenly and family, the previous owner of the Pattison Coe Hill home.

?The first two books sell for \$50, the military book for \$40. The Old Hastings Mercantile [and Gallery] makes nothing on the sale. Every penny goes back to the Wollaston Heritage Committee for their work preserving local heritage,? he says in this posting.

Mortimer attended the meeting to make a couple of introductions and to see the grounds for the first time.

?It looks like a great potential attraction for locals and tourists where a lot can be learned about the mining history of the area as well as other aspects of life in Wollaston in the last 150 years or so,? she says.

Currie says that the Wollaston Heritage Committee brought a delegation to the March 14 council meeting to present their ideas about expanding the museum site. In the Bancroft This Week article from March 24 entitled ?Wollaston Heritage Centre presents to Wollaston council,? Mayor Michael Fuerth said that Dan McCaw's March 14 delegation to council was very good, there were lots of questions from council, and they planned on updating the Strategic Plan to include the heritage centre.

Currie told Bancroft This Week on April 27 that as the Wollaston council representative on the Hastings Economic Development and Tourism Group, she wanted to connect the heritage committee with the business development/marketing services of the Hastings County team.

?My role at the meeting last week was essentially to make the introductions and learn more myself about the heritage committee's assets and plans. I had been to the museum before as a patron only, so this is my first exposure to the workings and objectives of the heritage committee,? she says.

Currie said she's confident that the Hastings County economic development team can provide some guidance and support for looking at funding opportunities and future plans for the site.

?And I hope collectively we can find a way to showcase the heritage committee's extensive and fascinating collection of items of historical significance for our area.?