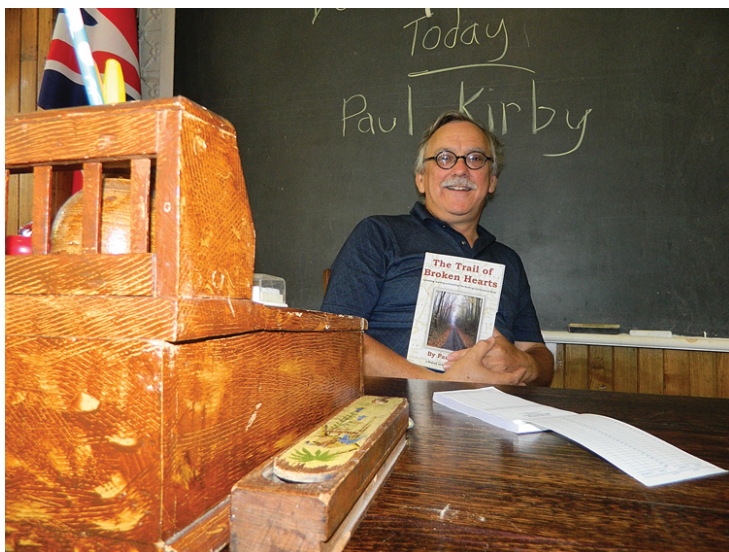


Author launches new book on Old Hastings Road history



Local writer, editor and publisher of local history books, Paul Kirby, holds a copy of his latest book about the Old Hastings Road entitled *The Trail of Broken Hearts*. The new book was launched with a book signing at the Old Ormsby School House in July 13. Kirby commits to books written, published, printed and bound in Hastings County. /Jim Eadie Special to This Week
By Jim Eadie Special to This Week

The Old Ormsby School House was the perfect place on July 13 for the launch of local author and publisher Paul Kirby's new book tracing the history of surveying, building and settlement on the Hastings Colonization Road (now called the Old Hastings Road). Ormsby was an important stop on the original colonization road, and was located at the junction of the Hastings Colonization Road, and later the Central Ontario Railroad.

By the mid 1850s, the southern portion of Hastings County had been settled, and more land for settlers needed to be accessed, and the new road north was built at the time from Madoc Township to facilitate this. Little did anyone know the hardship newcomers would endure in the rugged and unrelenting winters and short summers of North Hastings.

Kirby has had a lifelong interest in the history Hastings County, and in mid 1980s he was a reporter for the Bancroft Times following in the footsteps of noted reporter and author Bob Lyons. Kirby went on to larger newspapers, but in his retirement from the newspaper business returned to Bancroft to continue his historical research and open a small publishing business. His new publishing business is committed to telling the stories of Hastings County, and to have books printed, published and bound in the County of Hastings.

Kirby's new book *The Trail of Broken Hearts* traces the story of hope, and then shattered dreams of settlers who left a trail of 'abandoned farms, adversity, blasted hopes, broken hearts and exhausted ambition' as described by Ontario Land Surveyor C.F. Aylsworth in 1925.

'Most people drive up and down Highway 62 every day,' said Kirby. 'They don't even know that a few hundred yards over to the west there is history there. There were families, and churches; people had garden parties and weddings. There were very vibrant communities. Communities that sprang up on the Hastings Colonization Road had post offices, homes, a church and general store, and a cemetery. Cemeteries are a testament now to those who stayed there. Places like Thanet and Umfraville are just old cemeteries now.'

Ted and Christie Vella, who live in Toronto but have a family cottage on Dickey Lake came to the launch to pick up a copy of the book. As their cottage is nearby the Old Hastings Road, they felt it would be a perfect addition to the reading material for visitors at the cottage.

Family members are particularly interested in the history of the place they have chosen to spend their summers.

Kirby also noted that there will be three further book publications later this fall or by the spring of 2015 focusing entirely or partly on the history of North Hastings.

A book about Bancroft's Billa Flint written by a local author will be available soon.

The Best of Boyce will feature a collection of excerpts of Gerry Boyce's writings about Hastings County, the Eldorado Gold Rush, and other previously unpublished material. Boyce is the acknowledged best expert on the history of Hastings County.

The poetry and writings of Lillian Leveridge from Coe Hill that had been collected by her family will be featured in a new book as well. Her poetry usually focused on nature, the Coe Hill area, and stories about her mother who was an original settler in the area. During First World War, her brother was shot and later died of his injuries and her poem Over the Hills of Home attained international attention. The new book will juxtapose her poetry with excerpts of her brother's letters home from the front, and his wartime diaries.

New publications and reprints of out of print publications related to Hastings County history from Kirby Books can be purchased at local book sellers, or by checking: www.paulkirby.ca.