

Tudor and Cashel's history illuminates residents' souls

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By Michael RileyLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter

English historian, politician and writer Lord Acton once said that "history is not a burden on the memory, but an illumination of the soul." Bob Clarke, Joan Donaldson and a host of other folks from Tudor and Cashel have come together, not as a burden but to illuminate their souls and everyone who reads about Tudor and Cashel's history, from its inception in the 1850's to the present day. Their findings are available on the township's historical society website called Tudor and Cashel: A Community History, at tudorandcashel.com/history.

Tudor and Cashel Mayor Libby Clarke says the idea for this history website came out of their Sustainability Committee when she was a councillor with the township and was also the chair of the committee.

"I recall that the initial idea was to have a book written about the history of Tudor and Cashel, and we applied for a Seniors Community Grant. But then it was decided that if we had a historical website it could be a living document which could be updated frequently. We were granted the change from the grant program and so in 2017 we began the project. To my recollection, it was named 'We're walking down Memory Lane.' Many residents were involved giving stories and submitting pictures. Bob Clarke and Joan Donaldson did the leg work and Joan Donaldson input all the information and launched it. "I am very proud of this website and proud of all the work that has and continues to be put into it. Having experienced how excited residents were in telling stories and offering documents and pictures to be included in it made me very aware of how excited the residents were. Probably one of my favourite memories is that of Leo Poulain, who was a talented musician from a long line of family musicians in our township. He is truly missed. I always wished we could gather all his musical talents and knowledge and preserve them for eternity," she says.

The historical website was put together by the aforementioned Joan Donaldson, who used to work for the township and is a long time resident. It is a living history, with regular contributions of stories and photographs from township residents, past and present. The site is attractive and easy to navigate with subsections on Tudor and Cashel history, industry, places and people.

Bob Clarke says they got the idea to pursue the historical society from this history website, as Donaldson had preserved quite a bit of the historical record.

"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. Well there's other people too in the area that have got a lot of history. One gentleman, his ancestors are here. He's living right now in British Columbia, but he does a lot of research on the internet, and he's given us a lot of information. His name is Scott McMurray. So, there's a lot of information. There are a few other people in the community we've been talking to and they kind of felt it was important if we could preserve it," he says.

The aforementioned Scott McMurray says he has helped Bob Clarke a bit, but his family moved to Vancouver four years ago, so he hasn't been too hands on since.

"I was born and raised in Gilmour. My grandfather had nine kids, his brother had 17 kids, so 50 per cent of the Gilmour area are my relatives. My grandfather went to teach school in St. Ola in 1901. He bought the store in Gilmour in 1905 and owned it until 1950 when my uncle bought it. Grandpa had five stores, two summer stores, two sawmills and thousands of acres in central Hastings. My grandmother was a Smith/Phillip's and both her parents' families moved to northeast Tudor in 1865. Most of my ancestors came to Ontario in 1783 from New York. I am happy that someone is preserving this history. I have a huge amount of documentation and my

kids are not interested in the least. I still enjoy the hobby and it kills time on bad weather days," he says.

Clarke feels that a certain amount of the historical record is okay on the internet but he would like to end up with a hard copy that could be preserved in the township office for future generations. He says they'd gotten the ball rolling pretty well in the months prior to COVID-19, but then with the pandemic, they had to curtail their efforts. However, he says they've talked about getting back together soon to continue their work compiling the township's history.

"If we don't get back at it again, we drop the ball, and this stuff will be lost," he says.

Clarke's favourite piece of history that he has uncovered so far came to him from the town of Ameliasburgh, in Prince Edward County.

"There's a historical society out there that has collected all the old information on different townships and Hastings county, believe it or not. The bottom line is that a lot of that information ended up in the archives at Ameliasburgh. They were gracious enough to lend it back to our informal historical society and we've got a mountain of stuff to go through. Out of that, I was able to find the 1901 voters' list and that listed everybody in Tudor and Cashel, where they were able to vote, and also listed their lot and concession number, to make them eligible because they had to be a landowner at that time to vote. Also, the only ladies that were allowed to vote municipally were widows as they were basically the head of the house. Generally, at that time, ladies couldn't vote. What really impressed me was they had to list their occupations and there were approximately 300 farmers in Tudor and Cashel in 1901. So those people were on the old Hastings Road, the old Pineview Road and the old Snow Road. They were families on there and they were making a living off the land plus supplementing with logging. It just kind of boggles my mind that there were that many families and the average family would be seven or eight people, all living off the land. The other thing that impressed me was their toughness. I have two acres that I'm working on and it's a pile of work. Can you imagine 100 acres, 150 years ago, with just an axe, a saw and an ox or something like that?" he says. "They were tough, tough, people. It really impressed me when I went into it."