

HERITAGE CORNER

New heritage stone in Branton-Cundick Park honours pioneer families

-With files from the Sombra Historical Society and the Sombra Museum.

Tiny cemeteries scattered throughout Lambton County contain the bodies of the early pioneers who were responsible for opening up this often heavily-forested or swampy territory. Two of these courageous families, the Rattrays and the Cattanachs, were honoured recently with a new memorial stone in Branton-Cundick Park near Sombra village.

Although a small group of badly damaged and illegible headstones still mark the cemetery, previous efforts to preserve the site have failed. It took a concerted effort on the part of the Sombra Township Historical Society and the Sombra Museum Board to realize that drastic measures would be needed to restore the cemetery. The project was spearheaded by Catherine Bouman, a Historical Society member, Museum Board member, and long time Museum volunteer. The matter was brought to the attention of St. Clair Township Council and, with the help of Councillor Darrell Randell and Mayor Steve Arnold, plans for a new memorial stone took shape. The stone was created with the sponsorship of Chemfab Industries Inc., the Moore Community and Recreational Fund, and the Sombra Historical Society. The names of the 18 family members interred at the cemetery are now engraved on the stone and a digital icon on the front of the stone can be scanned to obtain more information about the site.

On Aug. 3, the stone was officially dedicated by a group that included members of the Sombra Historical Society, the Sombra Museum, and St. Clair Township Council. Also in attendance was Chris Keely, a descendant of James Rattray. She and her husband, Jim, traveled from Ottawa, Illinois to help with the dedication.

A brief family background

Peter Cattanach, along with his brother-in-laws John



Gathered around the newly-installed memorial stone at the Rattray-Cattanach Cemetery are, from left: Jim and Chris Keely, Catherine Bouman, Councillor Darrell Randell, and Mayor Steve Arnold.

Photo by Bonnie Stevenson

and James Rattray, immigrated from Aberdeenshire, Scotland with their families in the 1830s and settled on land along the river between Smith Line and White Line. It must be remembered that during that time, the area was a densely forested with a mosquito-infested marshy shoreline. With only an ax, an adze, a saw, and plenty of determination, trees had to be felled to build cabins, and wood was cut and sold to steam ships that plied the St. Clair River.

Some members of the two families farmed and some became mariners, but they were educated and they were willing and able to participate in the cultural and political life of the Sombra community. Through the years, members of the two families held community positions that included: first postmaster, township treasurer, clerk of the division court, tax collector, and merchant.

150th anniversary year will also mark defining historical event

Submitted by Heritage St. Clair

As Canada prepares to celebrate its sesquicentennial in 2017, we need to ask ourselves, "What makes Canada a great nation?" and "What defines us as Canadians?"

There are many answers to those questions, but history has already identified one event as a defining point for Canada - the Battle of Vimy Ridge. 2017 marks the 100th anniversary since that horrific battle took place on April 9-12, 1917.

The battle marked the first time that the Canadian Corp fought as one army under the leadership of Canada's own Sir Arthur Currie, a man acknowledged as one of the most brilliant generals of WWI. The courage, spirit, planning, and leadership of the Canadian Corp ultimately defeated the German forces even though the cost in human life was high. Over 11,000 Canadians perished in that battle.

Every one of the soldiers who gave his life for the greater good is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, which is built on land granted to Canada by France in gratitude and tribute to the Canadians who helped to free France from the German occupation.

The battle and Canada's victory helped to create a new and stronger sense of Canadian identity at home. All of Canada's military achievements during WWI evoked respect from all of its allies and earned our country a separate signature on the Treaty of Versailles, the document that ended WWI.

In recognition of the costly battle and of its significant place in Canada's heritage, a special Vimy pin has been developed. It is hoped that all Canadians will wear this pin as we celebrate our Canadian heritage next year. The Vimy pin is now available for sale at the Sombra Museum.

MORE HERITAGE CORNER

Moore Museum basket weaving class latest handicraft workshop in series

By Bonnie Stevenson

The Moore Museum's latest series of crafting workshops kicked off on Aug. 13 with an all-day class in basket weaving. The class attracted nine students and was taught by four members of the Sarnia Weavers Guild: Betty Greening, Mary Anne Fortney; Ann Maas; and Dorothy Carr.

The baskets are crafted from strips of reed that are soaked to make them pliable so they are easier to work with. The baskets are finished with braided sea grass and bound to secure the woven body.

The Sarnia Weavers Guild, established in 1962, perpetuates the skills and techniques needed in the art of basket weaving and new members are always welcome to join the group. It meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at St. Luke's Church in Sarnia and spokesperson Dorothy Carr says

the meetings are never boring. "Every meeting is a teaching meeting," she said.



Dorothy Carr, standing, explains a fine point of basket weaving to a workshop student. An example of the finished basket is on the table beside Dorothy's hand.

The next workshops in watercolour painting and crocheting are also planned for this fall. For more infor-

mation, see *Around The Township* on page 16.

Photo by Bonnie Stevenson

