

HERITAGE CORNER

New historical plaque reveals the wild side of Wilkesport

The story of Wilkesport is a remarkable tale of fearless exploration and foresight. It has now been revealed through the placement of a new historical plaque at the front of the Wilkesport Community Centre. The plaque was dedicated on Sept. 17 during a ceremony that featured two descendants of Paul Sturdevant, the first pioneer to arrive in the area. His fourth-great-grandson, Paul Sturdevant, and his wife, Shirley, along with Diane Rose, attended the dedication. Shirley Sturdevant, a historian who has researched the Sturdevant family, was able to reveal the genesis of the Wilkesport area.

Around 1827, Sturdevant, a lumber man from New York State, traveled to this area and was met by a dense, foreboding forest and swampy, inhospitable land that had discouraged other explorers of the day. After building himself a log cabin, he stayed the winter and went home, only to return with his four sons to help him open up the land. It was a difficult task with only Indian trails to follow until the late 1840s. As timber was cleared and drainage ditches were dug, the land eventually dried up to allow further settlement and the development of agriculture in the area.

At that time, the Sydenham River was about 16 feet wide and 24 feet deep; it was wide enough to allow ocean vessels to travel to Wilkesport. The availability of lumber also gave way to a thriving boat-building industry and Wilkesport became the only inland port in Lambton. Ships built in Wilkesport include: the schooner Blackbird; the scow Elijah Windsor; the tug Harvey; the ferry Marion; and the schooner Relief. The complete record of boats built in the town runs from 1867 to 1888. Families that helped to



Due to inclement weather, the plaque unveiling took place inside the Wilkesport Community Centre. On hand for the event were: Sturdevant descendants Diane Rose, Shirley and Paul Sturdevant, Deputy Warden Ian Veen, Mayor Steve Arnold, and Heritage St. Clair Chair David Pattenden.

Photo by Bonnie Stevenson

build a thriving town included Sales, Grason, Brown, Ellwood, Ramsay, Jennings, Shepherd, Dawson, Tunmore, Burden, Tyrrell, Thorpe, Selman, Shaw, Lester and more.

Those who want to know more about the fascinating story of Wilkesport can find that information in the book *Wilkesport: A Passage Through Time* by Shelley Lucier, curator of the Sombra Museum.

Moore Museum Downriver craft sale welcomed surprise ISO concert

A brilliant sunny day greeted the Moore Museum Downriver Craft Show and about 2,000 people came out to enjoy the sights, the vendors' wares, and this year, the sound of beautiful music played by a trio from the International Symphony Orchestra (ISO). The orchestra's Random Acts of Culture program sent combos from the orchestra out to entertain at several Lambton County community events this summer. **Left:** A group of Sparks from the 1st Corunna Sparks group were fascinated by the music they heard during one of the ISO's "Pop Up" performances. *Photo by Laurie Mason* **Below:** Repurposed thrift store and garage sale finds found new life fashioned into beautiful garden whimsies by Annette Lau of *Recycle, Reuse, Repurpose*. **Right:** Corunna resident Pam Beni inspects a table of beautiful needlework while her companion, a 13-year-old shi-poo named Murphy, relaxes in his luxurious pet buggy. *Photo by Bonnie Stevenson*. Moore Museum Board Chair James Townsend says the event followed an encouraging trend of growth that has been underway for several years now. He credits effective advertising, such as the strategic placement of signs at major intersections, for getting the word out about major museum events.

