
HERITAGE HOUSE HAPPENINGS

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Avonlea Heritage Museum, Box 401, Avonlea, Sask. S0H 0C0*

Editor's Greetings

Hi Everyone! This is our second newsletter for the year-2008-and our 28th year of informing you "What's Happening at your local Museum".

When the museum was formed in 1980, a contest was held to name our establishment. Out of the many names suggested, Heritage House was chosen for the one and only building we had at the time. The name was suggested by Norma McKellar and was well liked by all as it graciously described the station at the end of Main Street. Over the years as more storage and display space was needed we moved in three small buildings on the south side: #1 shed was the concession booth formerly used on the sports grounds in Avonlea and then by the Lions Club at Dunnet Park. #2 shed came from the farm of Peter Geisler where it was used as an ice house for many years. It was built by Peter Geisler Sr. and Amos Merriam of Avonlea; #3 shed was formerly a cook car used by Phil Walker when he graded roads for the R.M. of Elmsthorpe. In 1996 a 50' x 100' pole shed was built on the north side of the station, and shortly after, St. David's Anglican Church was moved in from Truax. Now that it has changed so much, and with new brochures being designed this summer, it was felt the name should be shortened by dropping 'House' from Avonlea Heritage House Museum. Believe it or not, shortened it does better explain the group of buildings-Avonlea Heritage Museum (and abbreviated AHM follows the trend for text messaging). We hope you will take time to read and enjoy our "Heritage Happenings" for 2008.

Jean



PRESIDENT'S REMARKS:

I would like to start by saying "Thank You" to all members of the community and the Museum Board. You came to the rescue again. Early this spring, we made a major decision to spend a large sum on repairing the foundation of our 1911 train station. The Save Our Station (S.O.S.) Committee was formed to keep our past alive. With our board members securing finances to get the ball rolling, the contractor was hired. This past spring, Cardinal Construction from Moose Jaw leveled and stabilized the 97 year old piece of our history. With up-keep, our station should be around for at least fifty more years. How empty Main Street would have looked without its historic form for the 100th anniversary of the village in 2012.

Because of this unforeseen delay, the construction of the deck was postponed. Thank you to all businesses who contributed to the wheel-chair accessible deck. Your support is greatly appreciated. Thanks to all local men who came out to demolish the old one, and construct the new one. Also, a special thank you to the Dojacks for their youth and exuberance.

Thank you to all for the hard work and time spent fund-raising and to the community for donations and support of our endeavors. As a result, we have paid one-half of our S.O.S. loan back.

We have collected new artifacts and will be preparing new displays this coming year. Please keep us in mind when old items are getting in the way. We treasure these things from the past and hope to preserve them for generations to come.

Richard Geisler

Pass to the Past

Ninety-four Passes to the Past were sold this summer. Those who purchased Passes were entered to win one of several draws. Congratulations to the following winners:

Betty McRorie--the \$200 Temple Gardens Mineral Spa package

George Alexander and Ron Acton –each winning a framed picture by Bill Nelson

Peggy Brown –the “Main Street” gift basket

397 visitors signed the guest book this year. Almost all of these were tourists from other communities. Among the groups that visited the museum was a local school group, a group of teachers gathering information to add to the Metis and Native school curriculum, residents from Queen Victoria Estates in Regina and a group of motorcycle enthusiasts.

Most local people have toured the Museum many times and never fail to keep coming to our local events and fundraisers. That’s what keeps us going!!

A SOLID FOUNDATION

It’s amazing how things come around. When our station began to sag and insurance would soon not be available, if we wanted to keep it for a museum, something had to be done. The directors decided to ‘Go For It’ and arranged for a \$25,000 line-of-credit from each of our local banks which was backed by the directors. \$40,000 was used to pay the contractor and engineers. A special note of appreciation to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation who increased our grant application to \$10,000 from \$4,000 after more funding became available this summer. This has been applied to the loan along with local donations to the fund. Local response has been fantastic and so very much appreciated as mentioned in the following report by our Finance Committee:

“On behalf of the Finance Committee of Heritage House Museum and the Museum Board, I would like to extend our SINCERE THANKS to all who have so Generously Donated to the S.O.S. Fund. To those who have not yet donated, we do still need your help, to date we are approaching the half way mark, which is great. The following names sent in donations since our last

newsletter on May 26th; William Petruic, Phyllis & Ken Ridgway, Irene Nestman, John N. Donison, Douglas Brown, Roy & Darcy Phillips, Roberta Monkhouse, Louise Watson, Louise Forer, Julia Kincaid, Janet Day, and businesses–Sask Federated Co-operatives Ltd., Cardinal Construction Co. Ltd., R.M. of Elmsthorpe #100, Blue Hills Processors (2003) Ltd., Nelson Motors & Equipment Ltd., and Nelson G.M.

I have once again canvassed our businesses in Avonlea and they have assured me that they will each be making a donation so a big Thank - you to them in advance. It is very gratifying and encouraging for every ones support.

Garry Hubbard

THE DECK IS FINISHED

Following the upgrading of the foundation and closing it in, the deck was the next project. Lumber was on hand and with the help of boys from the Paul Dojack Youth Centre, who helped us out 2 ½ days a week, it was moved to the site and construction began. Directors Garry Hubbard, Richard Geisler, Clarence Johnson and 2 or 3 of the Dojack boys, completed the deck across the front with stairs leading down toward the Rail car and Display shed.

On Sept.26th the new deck was officially opened and dedicated to our Pioneers. A beef-on-a-bun supper was enjoyed by those who attended followed by Joan Hansen entertaining with her guitar and songs.

MAIN STREET DISPLAY:

It’s coming along slowly due to other commitments however, we hope in the spring to get at it in earnest. Two rooms, the barber shop and the General Store are almost completed. The walls are up, floors painted and woodwork installed in the Barber Shop. The embossed metal tiles for the ceiling have been cleaned and painted ready to be put up when the wiring is completed. A special thank you to Garry and Richard along with Carl Gillis, Clarence Johnson and Danny Flegel for the many hours of work they put in.

TOURISM:

Thank you is in order for the wonderful job our volunteers do as they –supervise our employees, prepare and work at fundraising events, repair buildings, do general clean up, attend meetings locally and provincially, and promote our museum and town wherever possible.

We are indeed fortunate to have so many people who care about our past and connect it to our future on a regular basis.

At a regional museum meeting we were reminded of the importance of keeping our buildings in good working order. “It is important to keep the original fabric of the building in place. If it is left too long, you cannot restore it.”

Our board members smiled at each other–this is what S.O.S. (Save Our Station) is all about. Thank you to the people mentioned elsewhere for their generous donation.

Board members have attended three meetings since Sept. which dealt with regional and local tourism. We are working closely with Museums Association of Sask., in particular Claybank, Sukannen, M.J. Arts Centre and W.D.M. to promote tour visits as well as family visits to our area. We are blessed in Avonlea to have 3 excellent drawing cards–the Museum, the Golf Course and Dunnet Park. We are encouraged to keep an updated website in conjunction with the Village, also to use our space available with Tourism Sask. and to work co-operatively in our town to help as many groups as possible benefit when tourists arrive.

We received lots of good pointers on displaying our museum materials. Particularly intriguing is the idea of collecting and preserving a real story about some of the exhibits. This honors our community and enhances tour presentations.

We were encouraged to initiate co-operative historical ventures with other groups. In our situation, some initiatives with our aboriginal brothers and sisters might be possible.

Museums are a vital link between our past and our present. Meeting with the South West Saskatchewan Tourism Association opened more new doors to the possible enhancement of our total community profile. We were able to share

some ideas to be taken to the Government about the next group of infrastructure grants. Hopefully these will be easier to access for smaller rural project than were the last ones.

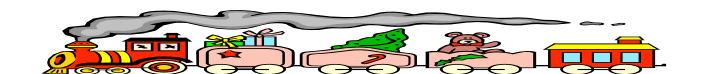
Linda Haverstock gave us an upbeat and inspirational speech on resident pride. If we work closely with our town council and other civic organizations, we can identify gaps in our “selling” of Avonlea and its amenities as the place to come. It is often the little relatively inexpensive touches such as neatly trimmed grass, lovely flowers, etc., that are noticed first by visitors. Getting rid of unsightly premises certainly made the outer edges of our museum look a great deal more respectable this summer.

If we network more, we will discover new ideas, new grant monies and new opportunities for growth. It is exciting to be part of a broad based group enthusiastically working to enhance our corner of Saskatchewan. We will always be a work in progress. However, the journey is exciting and energizing. We encourage anyone who would like to work with us on our broader mandate of community development, both past and present, to please contact any board member for further details of opportunities. Board members are Connie Beingessner, Jim Clarke, Randi Edmonds, Garry Erdelyan, Kay Geisler, Richard Geisler, Russell Howse, Garry Hubbard, Betty Jelinski, Dode & Clarence Johnson, Marilyn Keerak, Jean Kincaid, Mavis Leakey, Eric McRorie, Annamae Nelson, Dolores Russell, Bernice Sanderson, Darlene Watson, and Gillie Demerse.

P.S. We could use an idea for a museum mascot–maybe even one that could generally promote our tourism model for Avonlea.

Marilyn Keerak

Christmas Greetings to all of you!! ‘Wherever the New Year takes you, may you find Happiness along the way.’



A VISIT TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE

In July, several of our directors and spouses journeyed to Regina for a day out. Our first stop was Government House where we had a wonderful guided tour of the premises. We then stopped at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum where we enjoyed a picnic lunch in the Park. We toured the Museum displays and some walked across to the storage area nearby to view more exhibits. We then shopped, had dinner at Montana's, then on to the Sunset Ceremony at the RCMP barracks. Some enjoyed a tour of the new RCMP Museum while others stopped at the Dairy Queen on the way home. We all enjoyed the day very much.

COLLECTIONS:

Among the new items that came into the Museum this summer were a Hammerhead with 2 rings, two bridles & reins, blue enamel bread pan, slate, a trunk, portable typewriter, etc. to mention a few. A collection of items donated by Hilda Holland, included a workshop coal & wood stove, work bench, tools, hoosier, sewing machine, books, photos, albums, etc. Thanks for all your donations—we will get the paper work completed this winter and articles ready for displays next spring. We also visited Regina Plains Museum who were deaccessioning many items this summer. We obtained a Barber Chair which belonged to Frank Clements and came from Murphy's Barbers and Hairdressers (1939-1959) in Regina, and a metal 4 drawer filing cabinet which was used in the Midmore and Downton Hardware store in Wilcox.

IN MEMORIAM:

We are sorry to have lost the following Life Members this summer Isabel Petruic, Gladys Andrews, Laurena Ardelan, Elsie Watson and Joyce Ardelyan. Sympathy is extended to their families.

In & Around Town:

.....The rink was bundle of activity Thursday to Saturday as girls from across Western Canada played some excellent hockey in the Triple A Midget playoff sponsored by Wilcox Notre Dame College. The Regina Rebels won the tournament.

.....The new Avonlea Water Treatment plant infrastructure is 99% complete and has been fully operable for several months.

.....Several new houses are in various stages of construction—Damon & Doris Nelson house on Crescent Drive is nearly complete outside except for stuccoing; Scott & Tammy Ridgway house on Third Ave N. has the basement constructed and the Thiesson house beside the rink on Main is just beginning. The sub-division on the north-east corner of town has been surveyed into new resident lots and awaiting installation of services.

.....The Avonlea Arrows senior hockey team are in 2nd place in the Hi-Way Hockey League with 5 wins and 1 loss. Come out and see some good hockey with two more local players added this year, Scott Eberle and Blake Holland.

The following poem relating to past Christmases was taken from Claude Finch's book 'Living Skies and Saskatoon Pies' with his permission.

CHRISTMAS

*I've celebrated Christmas
More times than I care to remember
And I've seen a lot of changes
On that special day in December.*

*There was a time not long ago
Simple gifts brought joy.
A little girl got a coloring book
And a ball was enough for a boy.*

*The kids now fly to "Disneyworld"
But they'll tire of that very soon.
We can then crank up a spaceship
And fly them to the moon.*

*If only I could journey back
To the Christmas of forty-four.
Our family prayed for Peace on Earth*

And wanted little more.