

YESTERDAY

News from the Tavistock and District Historical Society

VOLUME 10

FALL 2008

Ancestors Wanted: Dead or Alive

The call went out from the Museum and a wonderfully eclectic mix of interesting ancestors turned up on display.

- Ross Butler, known to many as the "world's leading livestock artist"
- Armand Schaefer, Hollywood movie producer
- Dr. Harold Taylor, arguably Tavistock's best known family doctor
- John Krug, who undertook a profession few would do ... Undertaker/ Funeral Director
- Adam Fuhr, skilled carpenter and cabinet maker and a key player in establishing the first library in Tavistock
- Bob Rudy Sr. and, in fact, the whole Rudy clan of politicians and teachers and people about town
- Dr. Peter Zehr who deftly combined medicine and ministry, caring for all aspects of his patients and parishioners
- Ross T. Bender, Christian education teacher and later president of the Mennonite World Conference
- Wilfred and Adeline Corp, former Reeve and his wife, forever captured in one of the Lemp Studio Collection prints

Can you link these ancestors to descendants living in the Tavistock community today? See inside for more ...



Portrait of Armand Schaefer and DVDs of some of the Hollywood shows he produced.

Tavistock Museum and Archives open every Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 12 Noon

**Tavistock & District
Historical Society**

Executive:

Chair – Roy Erb
Vice - Blain McCutchen
Secretary – Mary Nicklas
Treasurer – Bob Rudy

Directors:

Paul Bartlett
Sherrill Calder
Bill Gladding
Bruce Halliday
Barb Matthies
Ed Pellow
Shirley Wagler
Tim Whitlock

Tim Mosher

Ross Butler: World's leading livestock artist

Leading the parade of celebrities connected to Tavistock of days gone by is Ross Butler, 1907-1995.

Born and raised in Oxford County, Ross Butler became a distinguished sculptor and artist who made a lasting impression on agriculture and art in Ontario and across Canada. Described as the “World’s leading livestock artist,” his portraits and studies of true type farm animals brought international attention to Canadian breeds.

His sister, Florence (Mrs. Roy Knights) lived in Tavistock for many years and three of her five daughters remain in the village - Mrs. Norma Kaufman, Mrs. Muriel Wagner, and Mrs. Barb Matthies. two other daughters are Mrs. Linda Jacob, New Dundee and the late Sandra McEwin.

The display also includes a look back at the Butler Rangers and Colonel John Butler who was instrumental in securing Canadian soil at the Battle of Oriskany in August of 1777. At the end of the Revolution, Butler once again turned to farming, and became the “de facto” leader of the settlement in the Niagara Peninsula. Seventh and eighth generation descendants now live in Tavistock.



Florence Butler, later married Roy Knights of Tavistock

Tavistock & District Historical Society

37 Maria Street,
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Tavistock, Ontario,
Canada N0B 2R0

MUSEUM HOURS:

Saturdays
10am-12 noon

Other times
by appointment



Tavistock Fall Fair display

Can you name the four original 1936 Monopoly token pieces used to move around the board?

The 156th Tavistock Fall Fair theme this year was “Family” and our museum display was entitled “Games Families Played”. Two display cases featured such games as Lotto (early version of Bingo using 90 numbers),

Lost Heir (the Canadian version using Toronto, Halifax, Winnipeg and Montreal police officers to find the lost heir). Pick-up Sticks and toy Model Builders made of real wood. Flips (Tiddly-winks), Snakes and Ladders, Dominoes, Ring-toss, Swing Bowling, Rummy, Blow Football, stereo viewer, Parcheesi and Monopoly. Tables and chairs from the Oxford Hotel were set up for passersby to try their hand at Checkers and Crokinole, or just sit and rest awhile. Simple games that have endured with time are still entertaining families today.

Answer: (shoe, iron, hat, milk bottle)

The display in Quehl's Atrium

The atrium at Quehl's Restaurant in Tavistock (right) is another venue where the Tavistock and District Historical Society is able to promote their work within the community. The current display features our Veterans as well as some history of Quehl's Restaurant itself.



MUSEUM CALENDAR:

Please mark your calendar, check your attics, scour your basements and plan to participate in the 2009 lineup.

Displays feature items related to the theme loaned by people in the community as well as artifacts from the Historical Society's permanent collection of Tavistock and area memorabilia.

Sept. 13 – Nov. 29

"Interesting Ancestors Wanted Dead or Alive!"

Dec. 6 – Jan. 31, 2009

"A Victorian Christmas"

Feb. 7 – Apr. 25

"Centuries of Farming" featuring local farms and tools.

May 2 – July 25

"Games & Toys" that families once used and maybe still do.

Aug. 1 – Oct 31

"Fill'er Up" memorabilia from garages and old cars.

Nov. 7 – Jan. 31

"Tavistock Artists" grand opening of Tavistock Art Exhibit

Hobbies and Collections

From July 5th to Sept 13th we had a very interesting display of hobbies and collections. It was a great time for this display with our school children home for the summer holidays.

One display featured old farm implements and a very unique Singer sewing machine which had been made into a farm tractor. Remember the old toasters of yesteryear, the ones that you had to watch in order to turn the bread? How many of you had burnt toast for breakfast? Well we had about a dozen of these oldies, one even had three slots! There was a Victor gramophone, with Nipper, ear cocked to one side, listening to his master's voice. These vintage artifacts beckon of an era long past.

Nowadays most woodworking is done by machine, but on display was a collection of wood planes that our carpenters of old would have used to make those intricate grooves and mouldings. Talking about planes, there were three model airplanes, one of which was a replica of a World War 1 fighter. We also had two ship models, a Chinese junk and a paddle wheeler.

Tavistock and area has many very talented people and it certainly showed in the display of carved wooden bowls and trays; who would believe that such artistry could be created from wood that ideally is just beginning to rot? The grain patterns in each really made them one-of-a-kind pieces.

And what a fantastic and beautiful display we had of carnival glass, with colours ranging from orange to red, and blue to green hues.

How they sparkled! The stained glass displayed in our window enhanced these rich patterns of light.

Are you a doll collector or perhaps a collector of teddy bears? You should have seen them all dressed in their beautiful outfits; the teddy bears were decked out in their finery ready for a summer picnic.

Tavistock is also known for the many talented people who crochet, knit, and create other handiwork. Tole painting is another art form done by various local painters. On display



A collection of medicine bottles

were scenes depicted on canvas, saw blades, milk cans and other metal containers. What a pleasure to display this for our community.

A local policeman collects police badges and on display were many colourful badges from across Canada and around the world.

For our sports fans we had hockey masks and face forms showing how the masks were moulded.

Last but not least was an interesting display of Indian arrowheads; these were skinning and grinding stones used by Ontario's first inhabitants and found in the surrounding areas.

All these wonderful exhibits were at the Tavistock Museum in one impressive display. We change our exhibits every two to three months and the museum is open Saturday mornings from 10 to 12 noon or at other times by appointment.

So please come in for a visit, you'll be amazed and enthralled as you step back into time!



Beautiful examples of carnival glass on display

The Donnelly story comes alive

On the night of February 4, 1880, a group of vigilantes rushed into a home in Biddulph Township near Lucan, attacked the inhabitants and then laid fire to the building. They next raced up the road to another house they knew, shot dead the man who opened the door, and then fled into the night. When daylight arrived, the grizzly results of their rampage were evident. Dead were James Donnelly and his wife Johannah, their sons Thomas and John, and Bridget their 21-year-old niece visiting from Ireland. And so began the legend of the “Black Donnellys.”

The Tavistock and District Historical Society was pleased to have Rob Salts as special guest at its Speaker Series Wednesday evening, September 17, 2008. His dramatic re-creation of the events that happened that night kept the more than fifty people in attendance on the edge of their seats.

Mr. Salts was rather sympathetic to Jim Donnelly. He feels that he and Johannah were unfairly cheated and evicted from the property they had worked hard to clear. A short while after that happened, Jim took part in a logging bee during which a drunken brawl broke out. In the melee, he struck and killed a Patrick Farrell. Donnelly was found guilty and was sentenced to hang. So convincing were the pleas of his wife on his behalf, however, that the judge changed the sentence to life in prison (which meant seven years in the Kingston Penitentiary).



Robert Salt, author of “You are never alone,” autographs books at our September Speaker Series presentation at the Men’s Club Hall.

When Jim Donnelly returned home from prison, he and his family discovered that old animosities run deep. They were blamed for just about anything unfortunate that happened in the area. Legend has it that even events in the Tavistock area were blamed on the Donnellys. After a neighbour’s barn burned, a vigilante committee was formed. When it appeared that charges would be dropped because the Donnellys had air-tight alibis, the group decided to beat a confession out of the family. That is when things got out of hand.

The events of the massacre were witnessed by a young 14-year-old boy named Johnny O’Connor who was house-sitting for the Donnellys and escaped the carnage by hiding under the bed that night. Despite his clear description documented in the court

records, none of the vigilantes was found guilty in the deaths.

The home built by Bob Donnelly in 1881 on the spot where the tragedy occurred has become a Mecca for those wishing to see the spot and hear the tale. Bob Salts, a retired teacher and current owner of the house, is only too happy to retell the story to visitors. “During the warmer weather, upwards of twenty-five vehicles a day frequent the spot,” he says.

But Bob Salts and his wife believe they have many other visitors in addition to the ones that arrive by car. His book entitled “You Are Never Alone” chronicles the many visits they have had from the Donnellys themselves—their restless spirits are reaching out to them from beyond the grave!

Christmas at the Museum!

Everyone is invited to celebrate the Christmas season at the museum. This year’s display is “A Victorian Christmas” ... a big step back in time to the late 1800’s.

Think you’re stressed during the holidays? Try having a Christmas tree with real candles, eating the big holiday meal all laced up in a corset with unforgiving whalebone, or discovering that your big present is one ripe orange. Times were certainly different back then.

To learn more about Victorian traditions, plan to see the display ... December 6 through January 31. Merry Christmas!



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NEED HELP?

Looking for help with your family history? We have a broad-based reference section ... several binders of obituaries, cemetery transcriptions for neighbouring townships, census records, old newspapers, family histories, school histories, church records and personal knowledge of many of the older families in the area.

If a family member was part of the Armed Forces then perhaps we have the information you are looking for. Come in for a visit or call Mary at 519-655-9915.