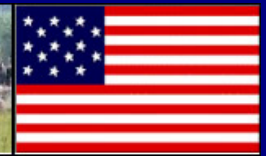


War of 1812 Celebrations



War of 1812 Celebrations Newsletter

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Let The Celebrations Begin!

By Gary McWilliams, *the Festival Nomad*

In 2006, the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Tourism, determined that a commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812 would be beneficial for Ontario and as a result, designated six Ontario regions to "receive support funding to plan and execute bicentennial legacy projects...". Although it is still a little less than a year and a half before 2012, War of 1812 Celebration plans are well underway in all six regions. The Celebrations won't be limited to just 1812, because the war actually lasted until 1815, so Celebrations will continue until 2015. In this newsletter, we hope to keep you informed throughout the next few years about planned activities both now and in the future and to offer you articles that will help you get to know more about Canada's history and our wonderful relationship with our friends to the south. Although it was a relationship that didn't start off too well, it is now one that is the envy of the world! This newsletter will be published 4 times per year (*quarterly*), summer, fall, winter and spring. We always welcome comments and suggestions.



Student Re-enactment
Cobourg

Living History...

Last year our 16 year old nephew, Zack, became a soldier! No, he did not join the Canadian Armed Forces! He did, however, join his fellow students and their history teacher, Chris Robin, in a re-enactment demonstration at the *Cobourg Waterfront Festival*. Seeing him and the other young people becoming involved in re-enacting Canada's past made me think of the thousands of men and women and their families who dawn period costumes each summer and fall weekend to become "living history"! As *David Brunelle*, one of the organizers of *Wasaga under Siege* (each July), said to me, "It's like taking your family on an 'old fashioned' camping trip!", old canvas tents, open fires, boiled coffee, toasted marshmallows and spending quality time with people who have similar interests. Besides, who doesn't want to play make believe, shoot muskets and wear neat clothing!



Surveying the field
Battle of Longwoods

Please see Living History... on page 2

Living History ... from page 1

All that being said, re-enactments and re-enactors play an important part in Canadian society. With the great number of new comers immigrating to our marvelous country, it gives them the opportunity to learn about Canada's history and why it is such a great country to live in. Re-enactments also help show how Canada and the United States became separate countries and how we eventually learned to live in peace together. Even if you are not a history buff, re-enactments are exciting and entertaining! The pageantry, colour and action all add up to a wonderful experience! Whether or not our nephew and his friends become further involved in re-enacting, at least they will have had a chance to experience "*first-hand*" a part of Canada's history! My hat is off to his history teacher and all of those other adults who encourage our young people to take an active interest in living Canada's past!

Getting Into Character...

Last year Judi and I visited the *Scugog Shores Museum* and their *Pioneer Fall Fair*. We were impressed with the village interpreters and how they assumed the identity of the pioneers they were portraying. It wasn't just the costumes. It was the little things. The way they spoke. The knowledge they displayed about their tasks and staying within character during conversations with visitors. We have visited quite a few re-enactments and pioneer villages and they all seem to attract people who have these characteristics in common! Re-enactors and village interpreters are, in most cases, unpaid volunteers. They do it for the love of history and they have a lot of fun doing it! Just think, they are portraying our forefathers in the heat of summer! No air-conditioned buildings! Dressed in "*hot*" old fashioned materials! I asked one re-enactor how he coped with the wool uniform he was wearing. He just shrugged and smiled and said "*You get use to it after a while!*" I wondered what he meant by "*after a while*"! Did he mean when the leaves started to fall and it was time to stoke up the coals in the fireplace? No matter, these wonderful, dedicated historians continue to keep our past vivid and alive! Thank goodness there are people out there that care so much! If anyone reading this article is interested in becoming a village interpreter or re-enactor, the pioneer villages and re-enactment groups are always looking for new volunteers. Just contact your nearest pioneer village and they can steer you in the right direction. Who knows, the next time Judi and I visit a pioneer village or re-enactment, we might be snapping a picture of you! If we are, let us know. We will make sure the photo ends up in one of the articles we are writing.



Marching to battle
Battle of Stony
Creek



Rifle demonstration
Lang Pioneer Village



On Parade
Fort Henry



Point blank range!
Marine Heritage Festival
Port Dover



Thin Red Line
Military Re-enactment
Upper Canada Village



Inspection
Wasaga Under Siege

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Dead Men Talking!

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Over the past few years Judi and I have visited a number of military re-enactments. They are great fun to see and experience! The sound of the canons being fired and the smell of gunpowder all add to the adventure! Most of these re-enactments take place during the hot summer months and many of the re-enactors wear stifling wool uniforms. It makes me hot and sweaty just thinking about it! The re-enactors attention to detail is legendary. Everything has to be perfect, true to the period they are depicting. Walking through one of their encampments, you can actually visualize yourself being back in time! On the battlefield it is even more captivating. You can feel the intensity of the battle! Guns firing, smoke filling the air, soldiers marching and officers shouting orders, advances and retreats, all for the sake of authenticity! As the battle progresses, soldiers begin to fall as though they have been shot! They lie there as their comrades walk over them! The sun scorches their fallen bodies! Truly "*in the heat of the battle*"! There is so much happening; it's hard to take it all in! Who notices that some of the "dead" have dragged themselves to the shade of the "old oak tree"? Who can tell that there are "*dead men talking*"!

Back to the Future...

Over the past years, we have been able to visit a number of Pioneer Villages and Re-enactments. In doing so, Judi and I have not only had an enjoyable time, but we have learned a lot of about the history of Canada and its pioneers. Our first encounter with the past was at the "*Battle of Stoney Creek*". This was a re-enactment of the 1813 battle that took place in Stoney Creek between the British and the Americans. At the re-enactment we saw the British encampment, browsed the merchant tents and witnessed a "*re-enactment*" battle. Along the way we learned about Canadian and United States relationships and our respective histories. Our next journey back in time was to the *Black Creek Pioneer Village*. As we wandered through the Village we were able to investigate the fascinating historical buildings and watch as Village interpreters told or showed us who our forefathers lived and survived. These were followed by visits the Queen's Park to see democracy at work in the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Then it was *Lang Pioneer Village* for their *Christmas By Candlelight*. In Perth we visited the elegant *Matheson House*. Here we could catch a glimpse of the life and times of an 1840's family. A short while ago we traveled to Keswick to the *Georgina Pioneer Village*. They were featuring a re-enactment of the *Rise to Rebellion*. This is where William Lyon MacKenzie in 1837 tried to incite Canadians to throw off British rule. Two weeks ago we were in Chatham at the *Gregor's Crossing Medieval Faire*. Knights competed against one another for the favour of a fair maiden. Then there was a Naval and Military encampment and battle in Port Dover at the *Marine Heritage Festival* or then a military re-enactment at *Upper Canada Village* in Morrisburg? In visiting all of these, we have certainly discovered that the "*past*" is definitely our "*future*"!

