

## Park Head residents complete community hall renovations.

By Keith Gilbert

Back in our not-so-distant past, almost every small community in Canada could boast of a church, a school, a general store and a meeting hall around which the community flourished.

The one-room school houses are non-existent now, renovated into living quarters for some nostalgia-oriented person and the children of the community all board the large yellow buses for school.

Most of the churches have gone the way of the school house and the general stores are now miles away in the nearest town or village.

But the one institution that has survived the test of time is the community centre with the small communities hanging onto them with determined tenacity.

The first hall for Park Head, a small settlement south of Hepworth, was built in 1890 by the Independent Order of Foresters. The members fashioned a "bee" and built a hall that stood until 1952, when the present hall was built to replace it.

"Committees were formed, and again the whole community

worked together, donating time and money for the red brick building, thirty feet by forty-eight feet, with a fourteen by sixteen-foot entrance and a full basement.

The new Community and Memorial Hall was formally opened on April 10, 1953, and dedicated "in fond and abiding memory of those who gave their lives in the two Great Wars and in sincere recognition of those who served in those great struggles..." states the Amabel history book 'Green Meadows and Golden Sands.'

Picnics, family reunions, political and social meetings all provide a rich history for the centre that was a focus of a ribbon cutting ceremony recently.

Centre Chairman Tom Rourke said that roughly \$55,000 has been spent on the hall since 1980.

Most of the renovations, including an addition were done in the last two years. Rourke estimated that the addition, a new kitchen, storage place, wash-rooms and a ramp for the handicapped cost about \$35,000.

The township of Amabel donated about 66% of the money

with Keppel township donating about \$2,000.

"The rest was raised in the community," Rourke said, referring to a list of over 120 area families who donated towards the fund.

Fund raising events such as the annual fall supper also contributed to the fund and the Hepworth/Shallow Lake Rotary Club pitched in \$500.

Building committee chairman David McGregor, said contractors were hired for the framing, stonework and kitchen, but the rest was "done by community members."

McGregor summed up the feeling towards the centre when he said it was "very important" to the community.

"It's the centerpiece...the place that draws people to it and strengthens the community."

And the hall is pretty well booked up for the summer.

"Family reunions, receptions, picnics...It's a perfect spot," said Rourke.

With such serious dedication and loyalty, the community centre will be part of Park Head for years to come.