

Thompson, George

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planning the major celebration.

"It was an honour to be asked to chair the centennial committee because of the fact that I was new to the community and no one knew of me or my abilities," he said.

He credits former industrial commissioner Fred Bemis for initiating the idea of a centennial celebration and Tom Baird, hired administrator, for helping the 25-member committee pull it off.

He's still proud of the fact that the centennial committee was able to raise \$150,000 during the actual celebration and repay the city "so that the centennial did not end up costing the city any money.

The centennial committee also turned over the deed to the log cabin — built during the centennial year and now Chamber of Commerce headquarters — to the city.

"That was valued at \$15,000 at the time," said Thompson.

Bell Canada's contribution to the city's centennial is still evident today.

Pat Howell set up a committee of company employees to raise money to buy a carillon for city hall.

"In terms of the centennial celebration, I was very pleased with the number of people who became involved and the number of activities that benefitted the community."

Thompson retired from Bell Canada in 1984 and, a year later, became chairman of the non-profit housing corporation. The corporation was formed to manage construction of 150 housing units from 1985-1995 on Bleecker Avenue, Tracey and Station streets.

"I felt I had made a contribution to a whole generation of people through my involvement with the housing corporation. If people were able to acquire decent housing at a cost related to their income, then I'm satisfied I did my part to make that happen."

When Thompson retired, he learned he had Parkinson's.

"I had difficulty writing my name because I couldn't control the pen," he recalled.

He managed to live a "reasonably normal life" until 1995 but has had to use a walker or wheelchair to get around especially over the past two years.

He has been forced to stop attending regular meetings of the Rotary Club of Belleville but he still does his best to attend Sunday services at Bridge Street United Church.

"My health has forced me to limit my contributions to the city...I feel I have been successful in life because of the support of my church and my family."

Intelligencer - Dec. 9/01 p. 3