

Meyers ; John Walden

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Intelligencer photo by Chris Malette

Jane Bennett Goddard, left, and Doris Almey, right, descendants of John Meyers, unveil plaque in Meyers' honor Sunday.

Founding father John Meyers remembered

By Chris Malette
The Intelligencer

Capt. John Meyers' spirit came alive again on the shores of the Moira River almost 175 years after his death in the town he helped establish.

A dozen city and provincial dignitaries, as well as some 20 direct descendants of Meyers gathered at the former site of Meyers Mill, on Station Street, to dedicate an Ontario Heritage Foundation plaque commemorating Meyers and his work in establishing Belleville as an early industrial site.

The former British spy and Loyalist settler was recalled by descendent Jane Bennett Goddard, who referred to the current home of the Quinte Construction Association as "the sole remain-

ing building" of the Meyers Mill complex that once stood there.

The reference had some local historians in the audience squirming at the assertion, as most in local heritage circles believe the mill building that now stands on the site to have been built after Meyers' original buildings had either fallen down or had been torn down.

However, Bennett Goddard issued a stout challenge to Mayor Ross McDougall to "finally teach the children" of Belleville about the exploits of Belleville's storied pioneer, as well as asking McDougall to convince city council to rename Front Street "John Meyers Trail," as she said it was once known.

After settling in what is now

Belleville and establishing the first mills here in 1790, Meyers was the first head of local government both here and in Sidney Township, which he helped found, and was first master of the Masonic Lodge in Belleville and helped organize the first fair in Hasting County in 1821. He was also founder of St. Thomas Anglican Church.

The plaque unveiled Sunday replaces one which stood in Victoria Park for 19 years, but which nettled descendants, such as Bennett Goddard, because of perceived inaccuracies.

Bennett Goddard was joined by Doris Almey in unveiling the new plaque. Almey is also a direct descendant of Meyers and her son, Christopher, wrote a book on the life of the Belleville pioneer and industrialist.