



Mr. History — Port Hope historian and collector Michael Wladyka is at home among his collection of historical documents and information. Photo by Mike Hamilton

Lifelong fascination with history

By Peggy Foster Jan. 16, 1995

As a youngster former town mayor Mike Wladyka developed an interest in history that has turned into his life's work.

Now 76, Mr. Wladyka has amassed an enormous collection of original documents, newspapers, artifacts and maps from the beginnings of Port Hope and area in the 1700s to the present.

Mr. Wladyka's parents, the late Alexander and Doris (Zaleschook) Wladyka emigrated to Canada in 1911 and 1913 respectively. They met in Port Hope and were married on July 24, 1915.

Both Mr. Wladyka and his brother Bill were born in Oshawa where the family lived for some time. Each weekend Mrs. Wladyka convinced her husband to take the family for a drive to Port Hope in their Model T car where they visited with friends. The youngster grew to love the town and its people.

"When I was a teenager I had a better file on the floods at Port Hope than anyone," he said during a recent interview.

A born archivist, he believes that "history cannot be hoarded."

In this vein he has always been generous in sharing his knowledge and collection with anyone who writes, calls or visits.

Mr. Wladyka has had hundreds of letters from people across Canada, the United States and in Europe as they search for their family histories.

As he puts it, he has collected information on every aspect of the anatomy of Port Hope, from the number and locations of gas stations to histories of all the churches.

He has personal histories on every mayor and other elected officials and every school and business. His files are filled with historic details and photos on the harbour,

cemeteries, service clubs and architecture.

Mr. Wladyka estimates he has between 175 and 200 files, each on a different topic. The files are placed neatly in boxes that are stacked in Mr. Wladyka's garage, basement and in a small barn in his backyard.

Many of the original documents were purchased by Mr. Wladyka from an antique dealer who had a shop on Highway 28.

He has more than 20 bound copies of *The Evening Guide* which he collected in the 1960s and 1970s. A bound copy holds each of the editions of the daily newspaper in a given year.

Aside from mounds of paper, Mr. Wladyka's collection also includes hundreds of artifacts.

There is the cornerstone from the first brick building ever built in Port Hope. It was constructed at the foot of Mill Street for John Brown, one of the prime movers of the time.

His collection includes original land deeds, paintings of the town's streetscapes by Peter Heller, more than 150 historic postcards and bits and pieces of personal belongings from former resi-

dents.

Mr. Wladyka talks about people such as Col. Arthur Trefusis Heneage Williams and his wife Lillian as if they are old friends. His vast knowledge of the life and times of the leader of the Midland Regiment at the Battle of Batoche brings history to life.

Mr. Wladyka is enthusiastic about the town's history, saying that time flies when he delves into a project and he will sometimes stay up all night pursuing it.

Mr. Wladyka is in the process of dividing his collection up between the new Ganaraska Regional Archives, which is due to open later this year, the East Durham Historical Society of which he has been a member for many years, and the public library.

FOR THE RECORD

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