

Saugeen Bluffs education ¹⁹⁹² centre dedicated to naturalist

By Christine Meingast

A fire which levelled the sugar house at Saugeen Bluffs has been turned into an opportunity to promote education at the Saugeen Valley Conservation Area.

The \$100,000 sugar house has been transformed into an education and conservation centre dedicated in memory of one of the Saugeen Bluff founding fathers.

The dedication of the Robert Sutherland Conservation Education Centre took place at its official opening at Saugeen Bluffs last Wednesday afternoon.

Mary Lou Thompson, chairperson of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority, said the interpretive centre has a worthy dedication in Robert Sutherland Sr. due to his "belief in conservation and preserving the natural

environment."

Jim Sutherland, son of Robert Sutherland Sr., attended the dedication ceremony with his family and said Crescent Vale Camp was a very special place for his father.

"I was brought here as a youth and I have fond memories of Crescent Vale," Jim Sutherland said. "We always valued our connection with Bruce County.

The late Robert Sutherland Sr. was a direct descendent of James Saunders, school master, postmaster and the first Reeve of Paisley.

Son of the late John Sutherland, a Galt area pioneer, who founded the Sutherland Insurance Company in 1872, Robert Sr. purchased forty acres of land south of Guelph and created a forest area with the Grand Valley Conservation Authority.

Robert Sr. became interested in Paisley due to his mother's family history as related to the first pioneers of the village and recalled fond childhood memories of a vacation retreat near Paisley, called the Crescent Vale Camp.

He returned to site years later to purchase the land of which he had so many boyhood memories, but the property was unavailable. Sutherland continued his efforts and eventually, with the assistance of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority, the Saugeen Bluffs Conservation Area was created just north of Paisley.

The Conservation Education Centre will be a spectrum of conservation and education for visitors and school children in the area.



The Saugeen History Hunters, represented by Jean Black (middle) and Isobelle Underwood (right) presented museum curator Barbara Ribey with a donation of \$2,500 in the latest of several projects raising funds for the Museum's contribution of a one-year internship grant. The donation was made from the sale of the book "Roots and Branches." Photo by Fran Sanagan