

Sydenham group's Heritage Day tour

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shows off historic houses



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The Women's Institute, that enduring rural organization with its motto: "For Home and Country" not only promotes better home life for a stronger country, but also an appreciation of the hard work of the pioneers in earlier times. Sydenham Women's Institute's recent Heritage Day was a prime example of respect for the community's heritage.

Those in attendance gathered at the Town Hall for a walking tour of the village, covering some 25 sites of special interest. At the hall they saw a magnificent display of heirloom quilts, antique tools and utensils, old magazines and newspapers (including the Sydenham News of 1902), pictures of earlier times, plus a display by the "Happy Hookers" — hooked rugs that is.

Buildings visited on the tour started with a stone home, originally built as a commercial building, serving last in this capacity as a milk-processing and bottling plant. The stately three-storey frame home next door was built by the Woodruffs, longtime operators of the once-flourishing grain and lumber mill at the outlet of Sydenham (formerly Sloat's) Lake into Millhaven Creek. Known as McGregor's Mills in the beginning, operators in the ensuing years with long tenures including George Yarker (1836-1871); Woodruffs (1871-1921) and Frank Anglin (1921-1969). Mr. Anglin also specialized in producing veneer cheese boxes, much in demand by the once-flourishing small cheese factories over a wide area. In his late years he concentrated on making huge round veneer boxes, used by the well-known Black Diamond Cheese Co. of Belleville for export cheese in 500-pound lots.

Joseph Woodruff was reeve of Loughborough Township from 1888 to 1891 and was warden of Frontenac County in 1890.

The beautifully re-

stored old home of master woodworker Sydney Davey was seen in its lakeside setting. The decorating trim here has been duplicated on gables, eaves and verandahs on other homes in the village, all perhaps the work of the master craftsman, who achieved perfection in everything he did.

His only failure may have been in never marrying. However, he achieved distinction in carrying on for almost 60 years a flourishing courtship with an eligible spinster — Clara Roberts, also an expert in her field of dress-making, Clara's love and devotion for her Sydney, no doubt equalled or maybe excelled that received by many husbands from their spouses. John Switzen's hotel, now a home, was seen at the corner of Portland Ave. and Switzer St. This early hotel was an important stopover on the stagecoach route to Harrowsmith, which had to climb the rather steep hill behind the hotel. The township council first met here.

The nearby imposing stone residence was built by Squire William Holditch, who proposed the name of Sydenham in 1841 for the settlement known until then as West Loughborough. It was later owned for many years by three generations of Ameys-Nicholas, Adam and Clarence.

High on the hill overlooking the village and cemetery still stands St. Paul's Anglican Church rectory — now a private home, once owned by Maurice Shillington, a colorful local doer. The original church built there in 1837 was moved to a more central location in the village in 1912. Other churches viewed were

Grace United, built by the Episcopal Methodists in 1861, the Holiness Church, built in 1897 with timber from local farms.

The Royal Canadian Legion Hall was built in 1862 as a Primitive Methodist Church. For many years it was known as Wesley Hall — named in honor of John Wesley, the world-renowned evangelist who founded the Methodist Church.

With Bertrand (Bert) Sills as superintendent, it was packed Sunday afternoons for Sunday school for well over a quarter of a century. The distinctive stage is still intact and from where leading politicians over the years have spoken, including Ontario Premiers Mitchell Hepburn and Harry Nixon, Earl Rowe, Progressive Conservative leader and later the province's Lt.-Governor, Judge William J. Henderson, who lived in Sydenham for six years as a boy, later becoming a lawyer and MP (1949-1958) for Kingston and the Islands, climaxing his public-service career as a judge of the Ontario Supreme Court.



Women's liberation promoters today would surely have been thrilled to hear the fiery oratory delivered in the hall by Agnes McPhail, Canada's first woman member of parliament (1921-1940). After her defeat federally, she