

Sydenham gets new park

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Sydenham Mill Park, the old site of the Sydenham Mill, was officially presented to the Township of Loughborough in a brief ceremony on Thursday.

John Conley, Chairman of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority, Rein Vanderwall, Reeve of Loughborough Township, and Mel Goslin, the Representative from Loughborough Township on the Conservation Authority were on hand to unveil a commemorative plaque.

Conley and Vanderwall were joined by Stewart Fyfe, Vice Chairman of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority and Thomas Foxtton, Deputy Reeve of Loughborough Township to plant a black walnut tree that was donated by Silverbrook Landscape and Garden Centre.

The land which is now the Sydenham Mill Park was owned by Dr. John Turner

until he recently decided to sell it to the conservation authority with the intent that it be made into a park for the people of Sydenham.

The Township of Loughborough and the Province of Ontario reimbursed the conservation authority for the cost of the land and funded the improvements made to the property.

When the conservation authority purchased the land from Turner the township agreed to maintain the park when it was finished and to contribute a small share of the cost of the park, \$23,000, said Foxtton.

Foxtton, whose grandfather was a stationary engineer who ran the Leffel Turbine that is preserved on the site in recognition of the mill's historic significance to the local area, said, "It will mean a little more to the older citizens who remember the old site."

He also pointed out the site where the steam tank stood as part of the mill's operations when it was owned and operated by Anglins as a cheese box factory. "I remember working in the steam tank," he said, "That was quite a job."

As a member of a family that has lived in Sydenham since the early or mid 1800's, Foxtton had many memories and stories of the rich history of the area.

The mill formed only a small part of the thriving community of Sydenham, circa 1942, for example.

According to Foxtton, the

village boasted two or three hotels, two butchers, a jewellers, a tinsmith, an ice cream parlor, a CN Rail station, several boarding houses for Sydenham High School students, the mill (at that time it was a power mill) and the ACME Farmer's Dairy, which supplied much of Eastern Ontario's milk and dairy products.

The mill began as a saw and grist mill in 1833 and was first owned by John Strange but it was destroyed by fire in 1897.

In 1915 it was rebuilt and leased to Edward and Alexander Barker, who then installed Sydenham's first electrical

system. "Power was only supplied in the evenings and on Monday and Tuesday afternoons - wash days," said Otto Gossage, who worked in the mill in the 1930's and 1940's.

The mill was again destroyed by fire in 1947 and left untouched until Frank Anglin installed the Leffel Turbine on the site of the old power turbine and used it to generate power for his cheese box plant.

The mill fell into disuse seven years later and has been left as it was until it was made into the beautiful, scenic and historical park that is now one of the centre pieces of Sydenham lifestyle.

"It should be a good gathering place," said Foxtton, "A place to stop and rest and to enjoy the scenery."