

The Art of Paddling

Carlisle artisan creates beautiful canoes

BY BREN CHISHOLM

The Flamborough Studio Tour has been taking place on the last weekend of September since 2001. It is organised by The Flamborough Studio Artists and is completely volunteer run. This year's dates are Friday, September 24 to Sunday, September 26.

Flamborough covers the Town of Waterdown, along with rural villages of Flamborough Centre, Carlisle, Millgrove, Strabane, Freelon, Valens, Greensville, Westover, Sheffield, Beverly, Rockton, Copeton, Lyndon and Troy.

One of the more unusual artisans participating is Roger Foster who has specialized in building canoes for over 11 years now, in a business he calls the "Carlisle Canoe Company".

Canoes are part of our Canadian history. The native people in North America developed them over thou-

sands of years. Canoe comes from the word "kenu" which means dugout. The large tree trunks the natives utilized were shaped and hollowed out to create an effective travel mode. For several hundred years after that, trappers, missionaries, and explorers used them for their day-to-day tasks.

Over the years, canoes have seen improvements, but in many ways, retain the same simple design that elevates the canoe to a work of art. Unfortunately canoe building and repair are not mainstream occupations, and that's where Roger Foster comes in.

Roger's original career was installing computer systems for race-tracks. He enjoyed all aspects of trouble-shooting and the pride he derived from finding solutions to problems that others couldn't solve. He then got a promotion that moved him away from

the aspect of his job that he most enjoyed. Also the ethics of working at the race-tracks began to bother him.

Having realized he needed to switch careers, it was his father who suggested he try fixing up the family's old wood canoe. At the time, he knew nothing about canoes or the wood

from which they were made, but it seemed like an interesting idea. Once he made the decision to work with canoes full-time, he found a builder to apprentice him for 18 months. "After a few alterations to my workshop; an apprenticeship with another canoe builder; and a small number of legal changes to the property, I was in business," says Roger. More importantly, he came away with some remarkable tools to begin his new life.

Roger's time is now divided between teaching his craft to all ages and restoring old canoes. Only a small portion of his time is dedicated to fulfilling orders for custom-made canoes because most people who make their way to his 10-acre property in rural Carlisle want to participate in the long-lost art of canoe-building.

While most of his clients are from Southern Ontario, there are those who are willing to travel from as far away as Texas, Australia, Vancouver and Germany to stay for usually two weeks at a nearby Bed & Breakfast. Their days - and sometimes evenings - are spent building a canoe from start to finish. Once completed, their finished product is either carried home, or if it is too far away, it is shipped.

The western cedar he uses is imported from British Columbia. The white cedar he uses is from around Bancroft in Ontario and his own property north of Waterdown provides him

with black cherry wood. Wooden canoe building and restoration is rare in this day and age, and Roger possesses the talent of being able to pass on his knowledge as living history to anyone interested in taking a break from our fast-paced, "speed-induced" society.

"IT GIVES PEOPLE A CONNECTION WITH THE PAST"

"When we've got the steam box going and someone is holding the wood in their hands, there's nothing like seeing the look on people's faces when the wood starts to bend. They expect it to break in their hands but it doesn't! It doesn't matter if it's some guy who might have been the class room bully or someone's who's interested in the arts, it's the same incredulous look!" The pure joy Roger derives from his work is more than just building something by hand. He sees what it does to people when they are creating. "It gives people a connection with the past," says Roger.

Signs will be posted for the Flamborough Tour. Be sure to talk to Roger Foster, whose works successfully blend history and art together.

The Flamborough Studio Tour dates and times are as follows:

See ad on page 9 for more details.



Camera Obscura

The Art of Pinhole Photography

BY BREN CHISHOLM

With a bulging portfolio that includes writing, editing, poetry, pencil drawings, oil works, furniture-design, and even the licensing of her own typeface ("Lindsay"), there is little that award-winning Margaret Lindsay Holton hasn't conquered artistically. This year's Flamborough Studio Tour will stage yet another passion of Lindsay's - Pinhole Camera photography.

Her version of this long ago art-form will be featured along with some select pencil portraits and original "naïve-surreal-folk-abstract" oil works. Pinhole photography is considered by many to be a precursor of photography and has recently made a re-emergence in the arts community. Sometimes known as "Camera Obscura", the earliest mention of this device was recorded as far back by Chinese philosopher Mo-Ti (5th century BC).

"CAMERA OBSCURA" MEANS "DARK ROOM"

"Camera Obscura" means "dark room", and refers to a device that makes use of an optical phenomenon in which light rays reverse themselves when they pass through a small aperture. At its most basic, light rays pass through a tiny hole and recreate themselves upside down on a screen that is placed parallel to the hole.

Pinhole photography's lack of pretension captivated Holton's imagination some time ago, and with it came some highly successful results. In 2003, the Hamilton Public Library displayed 43 of her photos entitled, "Fading Farm Glory" - a proudly historical dedication to her old, family house.

"In general, I like Pinhole Photography as a medium because it is organic. Current photography is so computer-oriented now. I prefer working up a picture. It's such a pleasurable activity for me," says Holton.

To vary the final product, Holton works with six different cameras which range from a 2-1/2 inch one to a standard wine box which produces a larger image. "I've even used curved cookie boxes and I never use film." Instead, she uses photographic light-sensitive paper to create an image that is first developed into a negative print then to a positive.

Holton prefers working in open air where she lets the sun and nature be her guide. There is limited control with Pinhole photography and for some, unexpected interruptions of movement can throw an artist off. Holton, on the other hand, welcomes them for the interest they provide. "A cat streaks by the picture, a leaf falls...it's what floats by the eye and I love it all", admits Holton.

Along with her photos, a few examples of the boxes she uses will be displayed at the studio tour. You will see a "Penny Bazaar Marks & Spencer" cook-



ie tin and a weathered-looking tea tin which have been transformed into workable tools for Holton's unhampered vision.

One of her shots is of a small group of garden furniture that appears to be the focal point. You are drawn in first to look at the empty seats but then your eye glides over to the right where some casually stacked chopped wood is almost obscured by shadow. It is a calming photo because it hides nothing yet gently asks you to look further and take nothing for granted.

"A CAT STREAKS BY THE PICTURE, A LEAF FALLS"

Don't forget to bring a map of the Flamborough Studio Tour to guide you to Lindsay's display. Costs of her work ranges from \$30.00 to \$3,000.00, and you are even welcome to purchase a fun, reasonably-priced goodie bag to take home as a commemoration of your visit to the Tour!