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## Charting the past

• from Working hard on page 8

was held in March of 1977, with the first actual meeting held one month later.

"We should credit you with that," Mr. McNeil said to Ms Conway.

It didn't take long for the group to gain widespread notoriety, as both history buffs and preservation activists.

In 1979, they launched an eventually successful campaign to save the County Court House.

### Court House campaign

Mr. Dills used his newspaper to illustrate the building's historical significance and potential usefulness, and helped convince town officials to rescind their plans to demolish it in favour of a parking lot.

He said the town had previously torn down the Brown Street hockey arena, and that people had been walking by historical buildings "without really seeing them."

"I still think of that as one of the society's biggest accomplishments," said Ms Conway. "Three million dollars was put into restoring the court house, which was a big step for town council."

It was during this time, Mr. McNeil recalled, that the Milton Historical Society gained municipal support through grants from P.L. Robertson and former Mayor Don Gordon. Assistance later came from the Royal Canadian Legion and the Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA).

### Several books

Over the years, the group has amassed a wealth of information regarding Milton's past —

most of which has been recorded for posterity. Residents can now learn about local history through a variety of publications such as Milton Remembers World War II, Reminiscing, Walking Milton's Main Street in the 1920s, Historic Homes and Milton Biographies.

This reference/reading material is available at both the library and local book stores. "What's important is to put this information into a tangible form," stressed Mr. Dills, who's group has also put commemorative plaques on historic homes and organized annual walking tours.

### Tireless, thankless work

He credits many individuals such as Mel Robinson, Alec Cooke, Audrea Lear-Costigan and Jessie Hamilton with helping compile facts and figures — often tireless, thankless and even boring work.

"What would be nice is to have more volunteers to do interviews with the older Milton residents.

People don't usually think they know local history, but they often do. You just have to pry it out of them," Mr. Dills said.

Ms Conway said she's very happy to see that the Milton Historical Society is still thriving after two decades, while Mr. McNeil adds the real beneficiaries of the group's efforts are the children.

The Milton Historical Society's 20th anniversary will include a special plaque unveiling on the Town Hall steps as well as a performance by the Stewarttown Middle School Band.



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