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# COMMUNITY Page

## When smithy spruced up it should spark interest

By IRENE GENTLE  
 The Champion

A crumbling piece of Milton's past will be given new life in the future, thanks to the efforts of the Milton Historical Society.

The society is hosting a historic homes tour from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, June 12, with the proceeds going toward fixing up the dilapidated Waldie Blacksmith Shop.

Six beautiful residences — five in the downtown core — will open their doors for the tour.

The sixth home is on the town's eastern fringe.

All the homes were built between 1840 and 1890 and have been carefully restored and maintained to give a true feeling of 19th century architecture.

Costumed guides will provide tour-goers with a history of not just the homes, but also the people who once lived in them.

As well, a Moffat area blacksmith will be on hand with his portable forge to demonstrate the magic of the old art.

That's the art that carried on for years at the Waldie shop.

Located on James Street, the shop has been in the hands of Milton's Waldie family from the time its doors opened in 1865.

Those doors closed for the last time in the late 1970s.

### Blacksmithing back

Since then there have been sporadic efforts to rejuvenate the shop, which is one of the few remaining blacksmith shops in Ontario. The structure itself is post and beam timber, with a rubble stone infill.

Renewed interest in sprucing up the smithy has come hand in hand with a regenerated interest in blacksmithing itself, said Marsha Waldie.

Blacksmith associations have sprung up across the nation, helping to fuel the efforts of the Waldie shop's renewal, she said.

"It has had a resurgence lately," she said.

The entire structure will be worked over, said Ms Waldie.

"It needs everything," she said. "If you were born in 1865, you'd have to have everything done, too."

Though no price has been attached to the restoration as yet, Milton residents have already shown their interest in the project by making a series of in-kind

donations.

Aside from volunteering their time, residents have donated concrete, barn-board and roofing materials for the restored shop.

Recently, 27 volunteers gathered to empty the shop of instruments such as the blacksmith's forge and anvil in preparation for the badly needed restorations.

"We've had a lot of people come out of the woodwork and dedicate their time," said the society's Mandy Sedgwick. "It has kind of picked up its own momentum."

The society is hoping the restoration will be complete within two years.

### Kids will take it in

Once it's back in working order, the shop will likely serve as a tourist attraction and education facility for school children.

Feelers have been sent out to use the repaired shop as a training facility for the Ontario Blacksmiths Association.

There is also the hope that one of the associations will use it for their annual, weekend long blacksmithing competition.

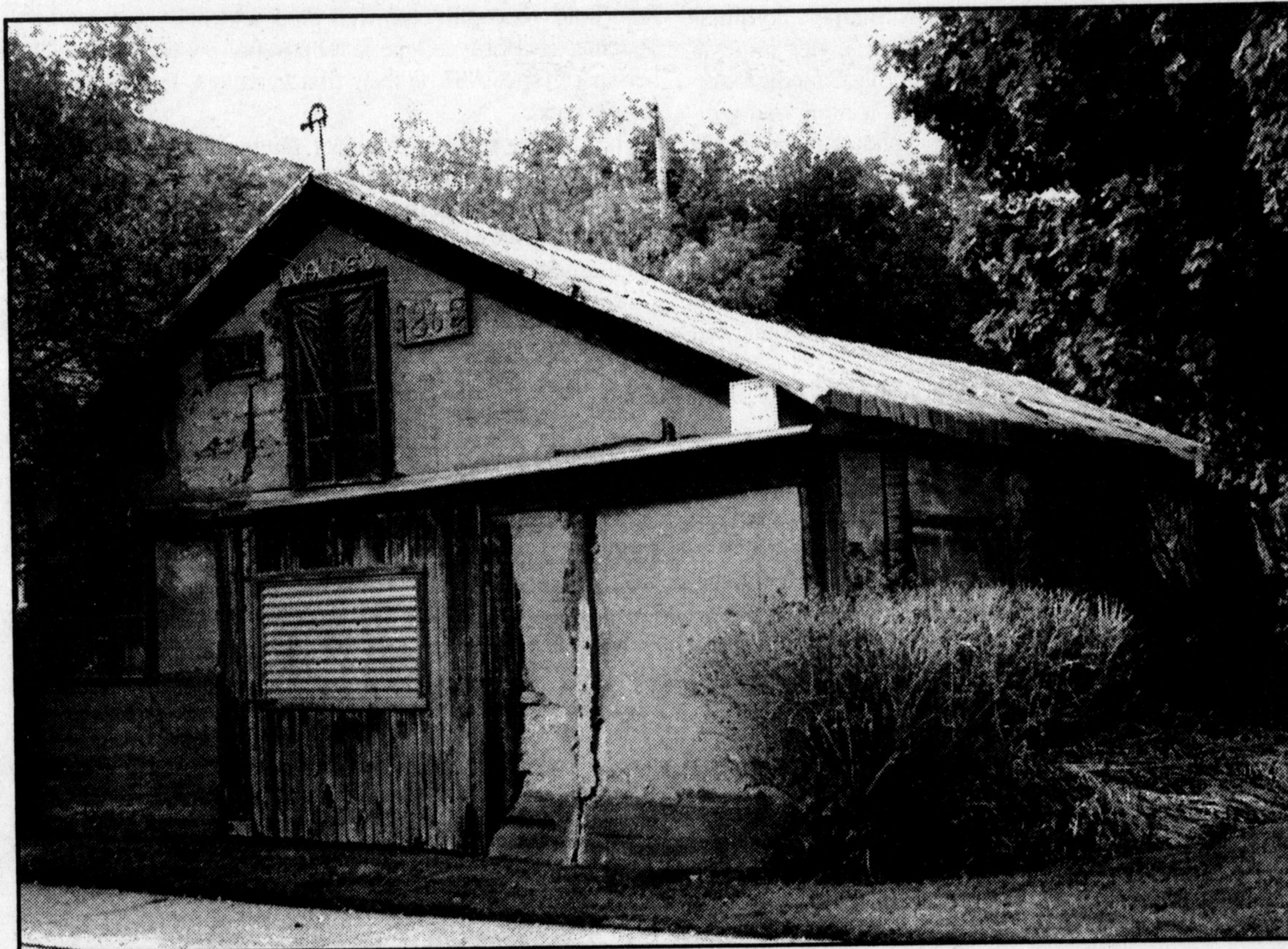
The restored shop could bring tourism to Milton, suggested Ms Sedgwick.

"We've got a really nice town here," she said. "So many people go to Niagara On The Lake but we have a pond and a nice downtown."

Tickets for the event are \$15 and can be purchased at Bergsma's Paint and Wallpaper, Harris Stationary, Delacourt's and Kalena Flowers, all in downtown Milton.

Peggy's at the Milton Mall and Old Is Beautiful Antiques in Moffat, as well as From Our Farm Country Shoppe on Fourth Line are also selling tickets.

Finally, tickets can be obtained by calling Helen at 876-1872, or Mandy at 878-4197.



File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Although the old Waldie blacksmith shop is badly run down at present, the Milton Historical Society sees a bright future for the facility once it is revitalized.

## Chamber plans to market area through a new group

By KAREN SMITH  
 The Champion

A major tourism promotion for Milton and surrounding areas was launched recently by the Milton Chamber of Commerce.

Escarpment Country, being marketed as a tourist destination that features attractions from a racetrack and an ostrich farm to conservation areas and eateries, was officially kicked off during a ceremony at Hugh Foster Hall.

The launch is the culmination of more than two years of planning and work by a chamber volunteer committee that formed a marketing alliance of 45 local tourism destination businesses and services.

Escarpment Country, a registered trademark, unveiled its new visitors' guide, rural destination signage program and diverse partnership roster.

The marketing alliance includes Conservation Halton and its 9,000 acres of parkland centred on the Niagara Escarpment, Mohawk Raceway and the Ontario Jockey

Club. It's also made up of seasonal festivals, pick-your-own farms, museums, sports venues, eateries, accommodations and specialty shopping.

### Strength in numbers

The destinations have joined to create a powerful pool of resources for joint projects in advertising, marketing, signage and trade show participation, said Escarpment Country committee chair Ken Moore.

"Together we are a major source of employment and an even bigger source of revenue to the community through the visitors that we draw to the area," he said. "It makes sense to join forces to become a major southern Ontario destination."

Studies show that the area now defined as Escarpment Country draws in excess of 1.2 million tourists each year.

Milton's Escarpment Country encompasses the hamlets of Campbellville, Moffat and Hornby and the 380 square kilometres north and south of the Hwy. 401 corridor.

  
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