

sponsors, the Hastings County Museum of Agricultural Heritage has grown to where it is as you see it today. Untold hours of volunteer help have saved the museum countless dollars, which in turn can be funnelled into each project. We have the services of everyone from a plumber, an electrician, numerous carpenters, draftsmen, painters, a man with a back hoe, and of course, "Jack-of-all" tradespersons, and all are volunteers.

As the museum sits on Agricultural Society owned land, no property taxes are paid. Also, we have focused our dollars on the interiors of the structures, rather than on expensive upkeep of the exteriors. Therefore, the buildings are all steel clad making them maintenance free.

One of our projects in the works is the Memorial Gardens you see at the front of the first building. These gardens are in memory of those individuals who have gone before us all, and who have helped in some way to bring the museum to where it is today.

To date, in excess of \$750,000 has been raised within the Hastings County area, and beyond. Very little in the way of government moneys have been received, a fact of which again, we are most proud.

The museum tour starts with a ten-minute movie,

narrated by Roy Bonisteel. It is intended to educate the viewer on the value of agriculture, the changes that have taken place, and the future outlook for agriculture within Hastings County and beyond. Further technology is available as well, with the addition of

an audio wand system. The wand enables each person to go on a self-guided tour, with an explanation of various artifacts throughout the museum. This system has been very well received by tourists. Further, tourists may view three very informative separate movies, Dairy Farming, Cheese Making, and Butter Making.

A coffee club helps with numerous projects. The men meet every morning in a little club house they have erected, and through their generosity we

have been able to move forward. We boast well over 600 shareholders of our museum. Most of the artifacts, with the exception of two or three, have been donated.

This project has captured the hearts and pocket-books of many in the area, and we feel that you will agree, we should be justifiably proud.

We trust you have enjoyed your tour and certainly look forward to meeting many of you again.



Highlights of the Hastings County Museum Of Agricultural Heritage were promoted on a media day held in April 2008. On hand as part of the tour were Lianne Radocsay (fourth from right) and Mike Wells (second from right) of the 150th Anniversary Committee; they flank Ron Reid of the museum.

photo courtesy Richard Turtle

AGRICULTURE: AN ENDURING LEGACY

by Lewis Zandbergen

Agriculture has played a vital role in the development of Stirling. Farmers were the first to settle the land making it possible for millers, storekeepers and other businessmen to follow.

The following excerpt is from the *Hastings County Directory* for 1869-1870.

"Located in the heart of a thickly settled and fine agricultural part of the County, and being possessed of one of the best flouring mills in the country ... and

the Grand Junction Railway running through it, it must become an important town and a central market for products of the County.

"The Grand Junction Railway which is completed from Belleville to Hastings, passes through the village and will establish an important market and a depot for the purchase and shipment of grain, cheese and all other products of the farm, besides being an outlet for all the country north."