

# Returning To Our Roots

## Exploring York Regional Forest

By Jill McWhinnie

Walking in York Regional Forest in early May, when the trails are edged with maple saplings and the airy blooms of foamflowers, when white drifts of trilliums blanket the forest floor and songbirds are heard high in the lush green canopy, it seems incredible to think that 70 years ago this was a wasteland.

"It was the desert wasteland of the Oak Ridges Moraine," said biologist Pam Fulford, stewardship specialist with the Region of York. "When European settlement began, forests covered 90 per cent of the region. By the late 1800s there were no forests left. The land had been clear cut for agriculture, exposing the sandy soils of the moraine to wind and water erosion. The soils literally blew away.

"Reforestation efforts by the provincial Department of Lands and Forests and York County began in the 1920s, when we realized that growing forests was a good idea. Plantations of red pine, which grew in the sandy soil, have gradually diversified to a lovely array of mixed wood communities of maple, beech, hemlock, white cedar and many other native species. The red pine has been selectively harvested to open up the canopy and deciduous species have been planted and have moved in naturally."

In 2000, in recognition of its site restoration and sustainable forest management practices, the forest achieved international recognition by being awarded Forest Stewardship Council certification status, the first public forest in Canada to be so certified. Certification runs for five years and the forest has recently been recertified.

York Region Forest now occupies over 2,000 hectares and consists of 20 tracts, several of which are located in Whitchurch-Stouffville. Forestry staff and the regional forest advisory

team host events throughout the year that offer exciting leisure opportunities to region residents and educate them about the value of the forest, so that it will be there for generations to come.

"One of our most popular events is the Snowshoe Stroll, held in February," said Pam. "People love snowshoeing through the forest at night, looking for signs of wildlife and seeing the stars. And this year the Spring Forest Festival, held just after Earth Day, attracted over 400 people, our highest attendance ever. Visitors planted trees in the woods, enjoyed horse-drawn wagon rides, visited environmental information booths set up along the trails, including a live reptile and amphibian display, and enjoyed the music of a live fiddler.

"It's wonderful to see many new Canadians visiting the forest," she said. "Their children often attend a Nature's Classroom program, offered to school and community groups, then the whole family will return for a visit.

"On June 19 we'll be hosting 'Trim-a-Limb' tree pruning demo, in the Hollridge Tract, 16389 Hwy 48, 10 a.m. to noon. A forester will show visitors how to plant, prune and maintain trees and then lead a tree identification hike in the forest. York Region's Official Plan goal is to increase the region's total forest cover to a minimum of 25 per cent from the current 18 per cent. The target cannot be met by planting on public land only, we're counting on everyone and their backyards to help meet that target.

"We need trees. We get solace from nature," said Pam. "Right after 9/11, there were no planes flying - the regional forest was silent but it was packed with people. Walking in the woods re-energizes and refreshes us. It returns us to our 'roots'."

For upcoming events in York Region Forest visit: [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)



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### HEIRLOOMS from page 23

Potteries made a vast array of products, no doubt a factor in their success, including jars, jugs, butter churns, spittoons, pitchers, pots, bowls, plates, teapots, planters and even crocks as large as 50 gallons!

Today there are many

collectors of both Medalta and Medicine Hat pottery. These collectors are attracted to the large variety of items available as well as the many vibrant colours used in their production, as seen in the photo. The largest pitcher stands 7 inches tall and is a soft yellow, the next at 6.5

inches is a strong hunter green and the 6 inch one is a simple turquoise with the smallest pitcher at 4.5 inches having a light pastel blue colour.

This represents a small fraction of the colours produced by this company. Another factor in their popularity is that most of these pieces are available at a reasonable price. Any of these pitchers can be found with a little perseverance for between \$30 and \$75.

I welcome inquiries about any objects and look forward to seeing and perhaps writing about them. Please forward a photo and a description to me through *Stouffville Free Press* or drop them off at Reid's Antiques, 6397 Main St. Stouffville during regular business hours or email me at [Robert@reidsantiques.com](mailto:Robert@reidsantiques.com).



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