

Grand Opening

You are cordially invited to the opening day of the

Backus-Page House Museum 2008 Season

May 3rd, 2008

12 to 4:30pm

Official Opening Ceremony - 2:00 pm

BAKE SALE with the Anglican Church Women.

FREE DRAW for basket of baked goodies.

HOUSE TOURS with costumed interpreters.

DEMONSTRATIONS include quilting and use of the latest museum acquisition, a period cook stove.

Come and enjoy the day!

Backus Page House Museum, 29424 Lakeview Line, Wallacetown, Ontario
519-762-3072

tyrconnell@execulink.com

April 2008

Dear Members of the Tyrconnell Heritage Society

After this long winter with the promise of warm days ahead, I, for one, am looking forward to our Grand Opening on May 3rd. A day at the Backus-Page House in the country setting of the Pearce Park will be a welcome change of pace. Once again, we are planning many activities over the summer months, which we hope, will be of interest to you. As members you are always welcome to visit the museum and browse through the property. At the close of the season, we plan to hold a "Members Only" barbeque.

Thank you for sending your membership dues in so promptly. Now that our financial year runs from January 1st to December 31st, rather than October 31st to November first, rest assured that I will no longer be making reminder calls in early December. Your membership is important to us. By joining the Tyrconnell Heritage Society you are supporting the rich history of the Talbot Settlement.

For those few of you who may have forgotten to enclose your membership fee for 2008, a form is provided below for easy address. A reminder that our fees have been raised to:

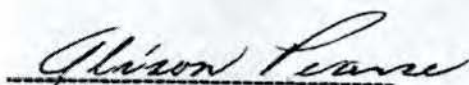
Individual Annual Membership - \$25

Family Membership- includes spouses and children under 18- \$30

Organization Membership - \$35

Business Membership - \$50

Individual Lifetime Membership – One time payment of only \$200



Chair- Membership Committee



My Membership for 2008

Make all cheques payable to the Tyrconnell Heritage Society,
and return to
Tyrconnell Heritage Society, P.O. Box 26, 29424 Lakeview Line,
Wallacetown, Ontario N0L 2M0

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Type of Membership (circle one) Individual Family Organization

We thank you for your support and generosity.

Sincerely, Tyrconnell Heritage Society

TYRCONNELL HERITAGE SOCIETY



SATURDAY, MAY 24TH, 2008

RE-LIVE THE TALBOT SETTLEMENT

Saturday, May 24th, 2008
Relive the Talbot Settlement - Pioneer Day is open to the public from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Come out and experience the life of the Pioneers. Visit the native encampment and see the cannon!
Pancake Breakfast and BBQ available
Small admission fee



Backus-Page House Museum
29424 Lakeview Line
Wallacetown, Ontario
519-762-3072

This event is sponsored in part by the "Building Committees through Arts and Heritage Program" from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Cactus, Cattle and Cowboys

Saturday
August 2

Round everyone
up for a weekend
of fun

Free Admission

Some individual events have a separate cost



Horse Parade

Horses and horse drawn vehicles only.
Authentic stagecoach.
Cowboys and cowgirls. Horses, horses horses.
High noon, Aug. 2 in downtown West Lorne.

Wild West fun in Western Elgin

Events begin in downtown West Lorne

Some events subject to change

Special events all day Aug. 2 include:

Blacksmith
Cowboy Poet
Horse breed displays
Riding demonstrations
Wagon rides
Quick draw paintball contest
Roping demonstrations
Cowboy cooking
Western children's games
Food
Jamboree
Line Dancing
Square Dancing
Music
So much more

8:30 a.m. Events start with a Farmers' Market and activities in downtown West Lorne, leading up to the horses-only parade at noon.

1 to 8 p.m. Events open at Ballistik Paintball Park, (north end of West Lorne off Graham Road)

**Just minutes from
London and Chatham
off Highway 401**

For updated information about this and other events, join us online on Facebook in the Marketing Partners of Western Elgin group.

Trail Rides

Aug 3, 4



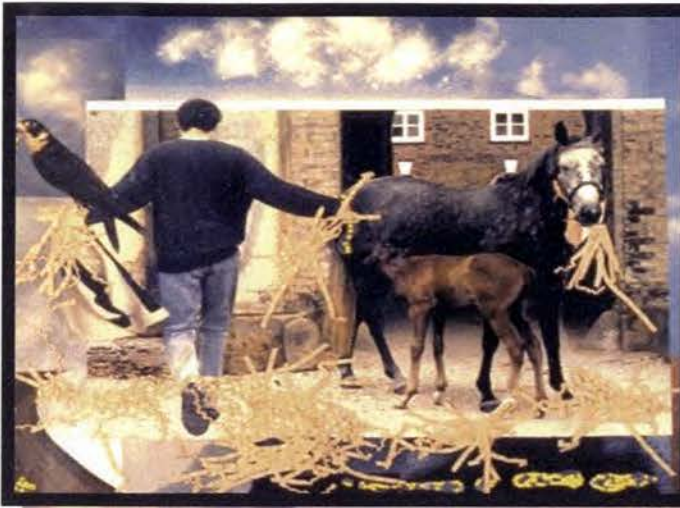
Horse owners, join us Saturday for the parade and then take part in an afternoon trail ride. Free primitive camping and evening jamboree, followed by another Sunday trail ride. Some free box stalls available. Call for details. Cost is a donation to the local Trans-Canada Trail Association.

Go West! Western Elgin County
Southern Ontario's backyard
Just minutes from London/Chatham off Highway 401

Take 401 exit #137 into West Lorne.
The fun begins on Graham and Main

Parade and Trail Ride info: Call 519-762-2783 or Call free 1-866-401-2965

Brought to you by MPOWER, the Municipalities and Chambers of Commerce of West Elgin and Dutton Dunwich, and the West Elgin Community Health Centre



FOURTH ANNUAL HORSE FARMS

Tour

A beautiful self-guided tour of several farms
Just a short drive from London or Chatham
off Highway 401 for a jam-packed day.

NEW FARMS

NEW ACTIVITIES

DEMONSTRATIONS

FAVOURITE FARMS ARE BACK

July 12 beginning in **Dutton**

9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Self-guided tours take you to several
unique and exciting horse operations.

Farms close at 5 p.m.

Hundreds of horses to see and new
features make for a day of family fun
all for one affordable price.

Tickets and tour maps at 283 Main St,
Dutton (in front of Dutton Baptist Church)

**Just 25 minutes west of London or 30 min east of Chatham/Kent
with easy access off Highway 401**

Children
Under 12
\$5

**Affordable
family-focused fun
Minutes from London
and Chatham off H 401**

Adults
\$8

Gas prices are up,
our ticket prices
have stayed down
to make this
an affordable
family outing

**Bring a picnic lunch
Many shops
and restaurants
located in
surrounding
communities**



www.ridingforchristministries.com

For information: 1-865-293-2668 or 1-866-401-2965

Summer 2008

President's Message

Looking Back –Progress

The spring of 1851 marked the completion of a stately red clay brick home which today we venerate as one of the first of its kind in Dunwich Township. The trim that lines the walls of the parlour and surround the fireplace showcase the beauty of rich walnut harvested from the surrounded woodland. Faux decorative painting graced the floors, doors and staircase of the house and the walls of the dining room and front hallway were beautifully finished with hand painted wallpaper. This well appointed homestead was the residence of Andrew and Mary Jane Backus and their children. Today we better know it as the Backus-Page House Museum.

At this time there seems to be no reliable reference as to first location and appearance of the homes of the first settlers in this area. We do know that the original land grant was given to Mary Storey in 1809. Three years later, in 1812, her grandson Andrew Backus was born and eventually he would be the one to find favour in Mary's eyes and receive a parcel of land as an inheritance.

Colonel Talbot would have reached the ripe age of 79 by the time Andrew and Mary Jane settled into their red brick Georgian style home in Tyrconnell. Still he would have well understood the feelings of Mary Jane and Andrew as they settled down to carve a place for themselves on the shores of Lake Erie. Although Andrew was a second generation settler he would have shared many of the qualities that Talbot used to established a settlement the comprised some 29 townships, extended from Long Point in the East to Windsor in the West and included some 65,000 acres of Crown Land.

As a child Andrew would have known Talbot and may have spent time in the company of this controversial and influential man. Visualize a picture of Andrew running ahead of a group on the branch bowered trail. Not far behind, Talbot walks with Andrew's father, Stephen Backus. Intent on only adventure and exploration, Andrew wanders too far ahead and his father must break off his conversation with Talbot to scold Andrew to mind. It would have been the very early years of the settlement and one has to wonder if any of them could have imagined what would lie ahead?

Andrew's grandmother, Mary Storey, was 51 when she arrived in Tyrconnell. In order to retain her grant she had to meet certain conditions put in place by Talbot. Families were to build an acceptable residence, clear a set portion of land in a timely manner as well as build shelter for the livestock they might have brought with them. Mary was lucky to have her brother Leslie Patterson close by as well as her son-in-law Stephen Backus as this would have been a hefty endeavour for a woman in her circumstances. Mary Storey's vision of a better future extended itself to both her community and her family. It was Mary who donated the property for St Peters Church and Cemetery. And it was Mary's bequest to her grandson Andrew in the form of land and a pioneering spirit that continues to stand as an inheritance we can witness and enjoy today.

We are very lucky to have this property and several others that stand intact from those earlier times. The Talbot Settlement was not exempt from tragedy and much of the hard work of those early settlers suffered at the hands of invading forces during the War of 1812. In 1814 buildings were burned, personal items were looted, livestock slaughtered and killed for pleasure leaving the work of development in turmoil and ruin. The attack was particularly painful as many of the invading forces were former Loyalists sharing the same history of the settlers in Tyrconnell who had come to Upper Canada in a bid to stay loyal to the Crown. That pioneer spirit would arise once again and the settlers did their best to rebuild what they had lost still looking to the Crown for guidance and loyalty.

The years that followed would have been marked by even more conflict. The nature of the area and the efforts to create a settlement would have pitted the settlers against the wilds of the Lake Erie shoreline. Native animals could threaten crops. There were years of drought, years of too much rain with no

drainage. A chance short growing season could threaten seed production. Late spring frosts might injure fruit trees. We still struggle with many of those issues today but the settlers did it without the convenience and knowledge that modern agricultural practices now provide.

The Upper and Lower Canada rebellions of 1837 with the constant threat of war and the need to establish a militia could well have sowed the seeds of despair and make one wonder what was going to become of this new developing land. Looming over this all would be the recent history of the Loyalists forced to flee from the States of America during its struggle for independence.

Tragedy would strike closer to the family that made its home at Lakeview (the former name of the Backus-Page House). A short walk through St Peters Cemetery tells the story of the untimely passing of six of Andrew and Mary Jane children. 150 years ago a very simple illness, easily treatable today could mean a death. Nothing could be worse than to lose a child and it wasn't uncommon for these pioneer families to lose several. Adults too could fall victim to sickness and other unforeseen calamities (diary entries note one farmer who died digging for water and discovering natural gas instead). There is a long line of grave markers that list life spans that seem much too short. Even with all this, the community would grow and strengthen as the years passed. There would be no stopping progress. Look into the eyes of the Mary Jane Backus portrait hanging on the wall of St Peters Church. Study her face with all the wrinkles of distress from a hard life. One can only imagine what she endured.

As a community and a Society we have the good fortune to have benefited from the progress and lessons of the past. It is our inheritance and in a way it is the same gift bestowed upon Andrew Backus and Mary Jane through Mary Storey. This red clay brick house nestled in the heart of the Talbot Settlement and the spirit and drive that settled this land still live on in the minds and hearts of the Tyrconnell Heritage Society. We carry on, ensuring that progress continues, taking on the responsibility to look back into the eyes of all settlers and carrying on the journey that they began by telling their stories of hardships and good fortunes.

Remember the year 1809 and feel the jubilation of Mary Storey as she began to carve a place for herself in the wilds of the Lake Erie shoreline. Remember the year 1851 with Mary's grandson Andrew and his wife Mary Jane, feel the joy they must have felt as they began a new journey in a home of their own. Remember it all and see the line that stretches out from the past to the present and know that we could not stand where we do today without all their new beginnings, new chapters in life and the stories and progress that resulted all because someone before us took a chance.

To all the past presidents, past directors, past staff, current board members, hard working volunteers resulting in a great future of progress for the Society and I wish you to know one thing... Mary Storey would be so proud.

~Henry
Tyrconnell Heritage Society President Henry Dryfhout



Andrew and Mary Jane Backus

Summer 2008

Looking Back to a Miracle

Just down the road from the Backus-Page House Museum is a quaint house that was once the home of Meredith Conn Sr. Born Aug. 10, 1791 in Dumnagoon, Ireland, Conn did not arrive in the settlement until 1828-1829. At the time that Conn left Ireland he was already well educated (from age 5-17 as well as apprenticing in bookkeeping) and married to his wife Catherine Humphries. In his lifetime he had 13 children, two of which passed during infancy.

Conn supported himself and family through a number of talents. He was by trade a weaver but he also worked as a teacher and a farmer. In addition to his broad work experience, Conn also acted as the leader of his Methodist Church's classes. After coming to the Tyrconnell, Conn would add the title of Justice of the Peace to his already extensive resume. He was an intimate friend of Col. Talbot, serving with his regiment during the Upper Canada rebellion in 1837-38. He was a devout man whose strong religious convictions coloured both his everyday life and business practices. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Conn's personal journal (circa 1858 to 1861).

Through the pages Conn relates some of the details of his day to day schedule as well as exploring and defining his spiritual interpretation of his life's journey. As a complete piece it makes for an interesting read as it offers a unique, though admittedly biased, glimpse into the social, religious and cultural standards of the time. One of the most interesting entries references an event that Meredith Conn defined in the light of his religious convictions but given today's perspective (and one's personal belief system) what Conn witnessed that day might be explained in a very different way. On April 29th, 1859, Conn writes:

"About eight o'clock, P.M., there appeared in the east, near the horizon, a luminous spot in the firmament. It moved slowly towards the west and increased in size, until it seemed opposite my place of residence. It then seemed to be stationary. It had by this time increased to an enormous size. To the naked eye it seemed to be about a mile in length, broad in the center, and ended in a narrow point at both extremities, very near the shape of a parabolic spindle. It was very brilliant, and it was a heavenly evening... The phenomenon lasted about an hour from its first appearance, and then vanished. At this time I had never heard of, or seen, such a long curved streak [*sic*] or body of light, resembling a deep reflection from some luminous body of fire, or from electricity."

Unable to find a logical explanation for what he had witnessed, Conn turned to the scriptures to make sense of this strange occurrence. His religious interpretation of the event illustrated how deeply he was moved by the appearance of this mysterious object and how he found comfort in his spiritual convictions.

We can never know what it was that Meredith Conn actually saw. Today this kind of sighting might give rise to speculation concerning "visitors from afar" or could be explained away as some kind of weather balloon or atmospheric aberration caused by pollution. For us the mystery will remain but for Conn, strengthened by his convictions and beliefs, it was a miraculous occurrence that assured him that God's hand was at work here on this earthly plane.



Day two I returned to the house slightly sleepy but ready to be a woman of the 1800's again. Slipping into costume I continued to organize schedules and prepare for the day. It wasn't until the early afternoon that I was able to escaped to visit and explore. I discovered butter making and bee keeping before I visited with our blacksmith who was covered lightly with the soot of his trade. This fine day we also had horses and a wagon! Finding my inner child I couldn't resist climbing on. It was a gentle ride along a route that took us out to the outlook and then up by the cemetery and I made an effort to explain to my fellow riders the great aspects of the area as well as suggesting sights they should see before I climbed carefully down from the wagon to visit Captain Bob. I finished my day by nibbling on scones from the kitchen (which were impressive without a doubt!), writing my name on home made paper with quill and then setting up the Game of Graces. I quickly learned the rules and it wasn't long before I had a group of children hard at play. I finally tore off my bonnet deciding that in this game such formalities must be laid aside! Laughing and shrieking I played with the children while trying to explain the history between gasps of air. Even the occasional adult couldn't resist the temptation and joined in.

~Mandy Parker – Education Program Coordinator.

Quick Glimpses



Brief History of Nails

Nails were handmade prior to the late 1700's. Often made by blacksmith apprentices, the manufacturing of nails was expensive and time consuming. The nail was cut from what was called nail rod. I have been told by a professional blacksmith, it takes a minute for an experienced person to make a nail. A rather ordinary house could contain as many as 10,000 nails. These would take several weeks to make and would be very expensive.

In the middle of the 1700's England was the largest manufacturer and exporter of nails. In the Northeastern U.S. in the mid 1700's, several communities had laws concerning arson. Not because of fire alone, but because buildings would be set afire so that nails could be salvaged out of ruins. When a building was destroyed or damaged by fire, guards would be posted quickly to prevent the theft of nails. Often when people built a new house, the old house was burned so that old nails could be recovered.

Besides being made by a blacksmith, nails were also made by individuals as a cottage industry. To provide for their own use and to use in barter, homesteaders would make nails at the hearth in the evening. In the late



1700's, machinery was developed to cut nails from plate. The nails were still square, but only tapered on two sides. A forged nail is tapered on all four sides. In both cases the head of the nail was formed by hammer. Eventually that part of the process was mechanized as well. The nail head was formed by machine reducing the need of the additional manpower to shape the head. Therefore when looking at the head of a square nail, that has been hammered into wood, you cannot be sure that you are looking at a hand-made nail. In my opinion it is unlikely that there are many hand-made nail in the Backus-Page House because of the time period. Handmade nails would have too expensive and cut nails would have been available for over sixty years.

Patents were issued for the machinery to make nails in the 1780's. There was good money in this and Thomas Jefferson established a nail manufacturing operation on his plantation. What we know as nails are called wire nails and they begin to be manufactured in the 1890's. This dramatically reduced the cost of nails, but cut nails have 4 times the holding power of wire nails and in some cases it took a long time for the wire nail to replace cut nails.

~Patrick Mooney

THS Board Director, History Committee, Marketing and Fundraising Committee and volunteer blacksmith

■ **HERITAGE:** Visitors to the Backus-Page House could also walk on one of its trails

Museum opens gates

PATRICK BRENNAN
Times-Journal

TYRCONNELL — It was a day to combine heritage with nature.

Saturday, the Backus-Page House and Museum opened its gates to people to not only visit the historic house, but take a stroll down one of its trails.

For children, there were scavenger hunts and separate presentations on butterflies and bees by Laura Hathaway.

The day's event were co-ordinated with an Ontario Trails promotion, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, to encourage visitors to explore parks and trails on Crown land.

The Backus-Page House and Museum is owned by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

There are four trails at Backus-Page and Lori Milos-Ivanski said the Tyrconnell Heritage Society has a contract with the MNR to maintain them.

The trails reflect a sampling of the natural Carolinian Forest plants, trees and birds.

"We have springblooms, ostrich ferns, salamanders, woodpeckers and fly catchers, Milos-Ivanski said, listing off some of the birds and plants along the trails.



PATRICK BRENNAN Times-Journal

Laura Hathaway, a beekeeper from Dorchester, Ont., displays components of a frame that make up a beehive. She spoke on bees and butterflies Saturday at the Backus-Page House and Museum in Tyrconnell.

The Pioneer Press

A Halloween Tradition

Halloween finds its origin in the ancient Celtic festival known as Samhain. This festival was a time for the ancient pagans to take stock of supplies and slaughter livestock for winter stores. In the Irish language, Halloween is known as Oíche Shamhna (pron: ee-hah how-nah), translated literally as "Samhain Night". The more modern term, Halloween, is shortened from All Hallows' Even (both "even" and "eve" are abbreviations of "evening"). As European immigrants came to the North America, they brought their Halloween customs with them. Early celebrations included public events of singing, dancing and storytelling. Festivities began featuring ghost stories and mischief making; and by the 1850's, annual autumn festivals were common. One of the most common symbols associated with the celebration of Halloween is the carved pumpkin or Jack O' Lantern. In 1850, poet John Greenleaf Whittier, praised this colourful symbol in his poem entitled Pumpkin;

"... Oh, fruit loved of boyhood! the old days recalling,
When wood-grapes were purpling and brown nuts were falling!
When wild, ugly faces we carved in its skin,
Glaring out through the dark with a candle within!
When we laughed round the corn-heap, with hearts all in tune,
Our chair a broad pumpkin, -- our lantern the moon,
Telling tales of the fairy who travelled like steam
In a pumpkin-shell coach, with two rats for her team! ..."



The ancestor of the pumpkin Jack O' Lantern can be found by the doorways of the ancient Celts who hollowed out root vegetables like large turnips, potatoes or beets, carved them into frightening designs and then lit them from within with either a candle or piece of coal. These ancient people believed that these "sculptures" would scare off evil spirits and invite their departed loved ones to visit. As the practice evolved in the Irish culture a legend became attached to the tradition.

"Stingy Jack was a miserable, old drunk who liked to play tricks on everyone, even the Devil himself. One day, he tricked the Devil into climbing up an apple tree and trapped him there by placing crosses around the trunk of the tree. The Devil was then unable to get down the tree. Stingy Jack made the Devil promise him not to take his soul when he died. Once the devil promised not to take his soul, Stingy Jack removed the crosses and let the Devil down.

Many years later, when Jack finally died, he went to the pearly gates of Heaven where he was turned away by Saint Peter for leading a miserable and worthless life on earth. He then went down to Hell where the Devil kept his promise and would not allow him to enter. Now Jack was scared and had nowhere to go but to wander about forever in the darkness between heaven and hell. He asked the Devil how he could leave as there was no light. The Devil tossed him an ember from the flames of Hell to help him light his way. Jack placed the ember in a hollowed out turnip, one of his favorite foods which he always carried around with him whenever he could steal one. From that day onward, Stingy Jack roamed the earth without a resting place, lighting his way as he went with his "Jack O'Lantern"."

When the Irish immigrants came to the North America they quickly discovered that pumpkins were bigger and easier to carve out than turnips or beets and so the pumpkin for Jack O'Lantern became apart of the Halloween tradition.

Source- www.pumpkinnook.com/facts/jack.htm, www.uwm.edu/~barnold/lectures/halloween.html Arnold, Bettina (2001-10-31). "Halloween Customs in the Celtic World". University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Poet's Corner <http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/whitt01.html>

The Pioneer Press

Barn on the Mend

The rectory barn (built in 1896 to replace the original stable that burnt down that same year) was moved to the Backus-Page House site in 2005. The 12 tonne barn was moved to the Backus-Page House grounds on a flat bed truck on March 17th of that year. It had been purchased by Alistair Littlejohn in 1965 with plans to move it to his property. Unfortunate circumstances prevented that plan from coming to fruition and the barn sat unused for the next forty years. Through the auspices of the Littlejohn family the barn was donated to the



Society. This year, through the generosity of an anonymous donor, the Society has finally been able to begin improving this historically significant building. Over the length of the spring, summer and into the fall work has progressed at a relatively steady pace as the Tyrconnell Heritage Society has

moved closer to establishing the St Peters Rectory barn as an active interpretive area. The roof has been re-shingled, the barn siding has been replaced and, weather allowing, the battens should be on before the official start of winter. The wood is being purchased to repair the loft floor but financing is still required to

finish the main floor as well as outfit the barn interior as display space. The Society is grateful for the generosity and hard work that has helped to bring this space closer to fulfilling the site mandate of the THS to interpret our local agricultural heritage and tradition.



Autumn ISSUE 2008

Pioneer Press

Board Changes

There have been some changes to the Tyrconnell Heritage Society Board line up. Unfortunately we have had to bid farewell to two of our longtime members. Secretary Ruth Wight and Membership Committee Chair Alison Pearce will be stepping down from their board duties. Alison tendered her resignation at the end of the summer season and Ruth presented hers in October.



Ruth is a descendant of Jonas Page who brought his family to settle just west of Tyrconnell in 1845. Ruth has been the Tyrconnell Heritage Society secretary for approximately 10 years and has made a strong contribution to the Society's business administration. Ruth has had some health issues this summer but she is on the mend and is looking forward to getting out and about to socialize with friends and family.



Alison has dedicated the last several years to building the Society's membership and improving membership benefits. Alison is a member of the Pearce Family who came to settle in "Little Ireland" in 1809. In honor of the 200th anniversary of her family's arrival in the settlement Alison will be dedicating her time to finishing a book on the subject and helping to organize events for anniversary celebrations for 2009.

The Tyrconnell Heritage Society Board and membership wishes Ruth and Alison all the best in their future endeavors and looks forward to enjoying their continued presence as Society members. On the occasion of her retirement from the role of Chair of the Membership Committee Alison Pearce has asked that the THS administration publish a letter she has addressed to the members of the Tyrconnell Heritage Society.

Park Studies

The John E. Pearce Provincial Park welcomes hundreds of visitors every year. From around the block to across the globe, no matter where these outdoor enthusiasts call home, they can all agree that the park offers a unique experience that can be found nowhere else in the world. The combination of climate, distinct location and Carolinian forest provides an increasingly rare opportunity for the public to enjoy and witness the miracles of nature first hand.

In 1998 the Tyrconnell Heritage Society reached an agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources that assigned responsibility for woodlot and area management to the Society. By agreeing to maintain the grounds, facilities and trails for the Ministry, the Society has ensured that this perfect jewel in the heart of the Talbot Settlement will continue to remain available for the enjoyment of the general public.

Recently several UWO studies have played out in the park, one regarding salamander habitats and another concerning the over wintering characteristics of certain member of the species Lepidoptera. This past summer, museum staff spent some time interpreting the general flora and fauna of the park. Two members of the Tyrconnell Heritage Society, Marg Hulls and Bruce Parker, have taken a special interest in the natural development of the site. Marg and Bruce were kind enough to share a little bit about the nature of their activities in the park.

"Exploring the Carolinian Forest via the Spicer Trail is an interesting and enjoyable experience throughout the year. Each month has something new to offer. Local naturalists Marg Hulls and Bruce Parker have been visiting the trails approximately once each month since October 2007 to record the trails natural features. Images are recorded with a digital camera and various field guides assist in the identifying process. Marg's expertise lies in plant identification and Bruce's interests explore various fungi. Each trip results in unexpected sights, from a little brown bat falling out from under the bark of a dead tree, to colourful insects. What they are attempting to create is a data bank of information so that visitors to the Spicer Trail will have an appreciation of the great wealth of diversity along the pathways in all seasons."

Bruce Parker is a member of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists and a frequent contributor to their quarterly magazine "The Cardinal". He enjoys backpacking and canoeing in the wilds of Ontario. Each autumn he tags over 200 Monarch butterflies for Monarchwatch, an organization that monitors the species migration routes and conservation. He is also involved in independent research work with the same species.

Marg has assisted with the Education Day programs plus she is actively involved with the West Elgin Nature Club, two retired teacher groups, the Elgin Hiking Trail Club, does Tai Chi regularly and instructs two SMART exercise classes weekly.



May 2008

Pioneer Education Day and Relive the Talbot Settlement Celebration

Great attendance was seen for Education Day this year with students visiting from London, Lucan, St. Thomas, West Lorne, Dutton and Strathroy. Students were treated to a full day of activities as well as a BBQ lunch. Relive the Talbot Settlement Day was a great success as well with many of the presenters staying for both days as well as additional interpreters highlighting the Saturday. The Tyrconnell Heritage Society would like to thank all the volunteers and presenters who worked so hard to make the day enlightening and entertaining.

Mandy Parker, who is spending this summer with us as our Assistant Education Coordinator, has provided an inside view of her experiences as an interpretive guide for the two days.



An Inside Pioneer Perspective

Recently I experienced the annual "Re-Live the Talbot Settlement" event that the Backus-Page House Museum hosts. It's true that I didn't attend any of these annual events in the past, however I would still go so far as to brag that this one was a booming success!

Friday was Pioneer Education Day and I became an 1800's woman tour guide for one of the 24 classes that was taking part in the day's programming. Admittedly I was a tad nervous even while my enthusiasm and curiosity had me as excited as the school children that flooded the area that day. Taking the children around I was thrilled to sit in and listen to the presenters as they spoke with gusto! Each one had such a wealth of knowledge and I was always slightly disappointed when we had to move on to the next station, only to be caught up again with the next presenters.

My interests and the children's interests often came together. I was absolutely taken with the delightful Col. Talbot in the basement of St. Peter's Church. I watched in awe at the Native Dance and Culture area where the children's dance troupe performed for us. Marg Hulls impressed everyone with her presentation within the Spicer Trail and the children were quick to volunteer to help the men saw away at the wood. I couldn't resist on the second day and pushing up my sleeves I took my turn sawing at the large fallen tree before remembering myself and smoothing out my full skirt and adjusting my bonnet.

By the end of the day I had seen 12 stations, been charmed by the "sales patter" at Sutlers Row, was ambushed, scolded by a Caldwell Ranger, and was thoroughly exhausted! However I was even more excited for the next day where I could discover more freely the other stations that I had missed.



1809 Landings 200th Anniversary

April 2009

Life in the American States during and after the American Revolutionary War was not idyllic for the Loyalist population. It's estimated that approximately 20% of Loyalists left to settle in other parts of the British Empire. Those who chose to stay in the U.S. while remaining loyal to the king and British Crown were not considered American citizens. The Loyalists were subject to land confiscation, triple taxation and had no political rights. Outright hostility was a common place occurrence. There was no American dream for the colonial Loyalist. The laws that marginalized the Loyalists were repealed by 1790 but the anti Loyalist sentiment continued.

In 1808 John Pearce and his brother-in-law, Colonel Leslie Patterson, left Pennsylvania to look for land and a community that would respect their Loyalist beliefs. Setting off on foot, the men first stopped near what is now Toronto but found the area too swampy for their needs. They continued on to Elgin County where they met Colonel Thomas Talbot and being impressed with the area made hard plans to start a new life in the wilds of the northern shoreline of Lake Erie.

It was no small task to gather up their families and belongings and travel to a new home in Upper Canada. The group used a flat bottom boat to skirt around the edge of Lake Erie while their livestock was herded along the shoreline. It was a long journey, fraught with many hardships, but on July 14 1809 the inter related families of John Pearce, Leslie Patterson and Mary Storey (Leslie Patterson's brother-in-law, later to be Mary Storey's son-in-law, Steven Backus followed in 1810) finally made their way to Port Talbot. They received their land grant in an area that would affectionately become known as "Little Ireland".

The families laid down roots and flourished despite the difficulties of the pioneer life. The Pearce, Patterson, Storey and Backus families were strong contributors to the development of the community and left a strong mark on the area. Mary Storey had been widowed in Ireland and brought three of her children to the settlement. Her daughter Anne married Stephen Backus and it was their son Andrew that built the Backus Page House in 1850(then called Lakeview) for his wife Mary Jane. Stephen and Mary Jane had 12 children and it was their daughter Sarah Ann who was the mother of John E. Pearce who donated land for the Pearce Park in 1956. The land for St Peter Anglican Church and St Peter's Cemetery was donated by Mary Storey. Records show that John Pearce, Walter Storey (Mary's son), Leslie Patterson and Stephen Backus each contributed 60 pounds towards the construction of the church.

2009 will mark the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the families in the Talbot Settlement. Take the opportunity to visit or revisit "Little Ireland". Walk the same roads that pioneer feet trod. Pay your respects to Thomas Talbot who rests in St Peter's Cemetery. Stand on the landing where Mary Jane Backus sat with her loom, looking out the window, watching the ships sail by as they passed on their way to Port Tyrconnell. Hike the trails of the John E. Pearce Provincial Park up to the clay cliffs that drop down to the wave tossed Erie shoreline. Experience the legacy and living history in the Heart of the Talbot Settlement.

Source: In-house records Backus Page House, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyalist_\(American_Revolution\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyalist_(American_Revolution))

