

## In Flanders' Fields

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high,  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders' fields



*The Unite Church in Wallace town.*



*Dutton main St.*



*Dutton - Lunenburg Remembrance Day Services  
Sunday Nov 4<sup>th</sup> 2001.*



*Photos by  
Helen Van Brink*



## How it all began...

The areas of Northern France known as Flanders and Picardy, saw some of the most concentrated and bloodiest fighting of the First World War.

There was complete devastation. Buildings, roads, trees, and natural life simply disappeared.. Where once there were homes and farms, there was now a sea of mud - a grave for the dead, where men still lived and fought.

Only one other living thing survived. The poppy flowering each year with the coming of the warm weather, brought life, hope, colour, and reassurance to those still fighting.

John McCrae, a doctor serving with the Canadian Armed Forces, was so deeply moved by what he saw in Northern France, that, in 1915, in his pocket book, he scribbled the verses you see on the bulletin cover. McCrae's poem was eventually published in "Punch" magazine, under the title "In Flanders' Fields", and the people of Britain, and the Empire, were able to learn at first hand what the war in France and in the trenches was really like.

Three years later, McCrae was to die in a Military Hospital on the French Channel Coast.

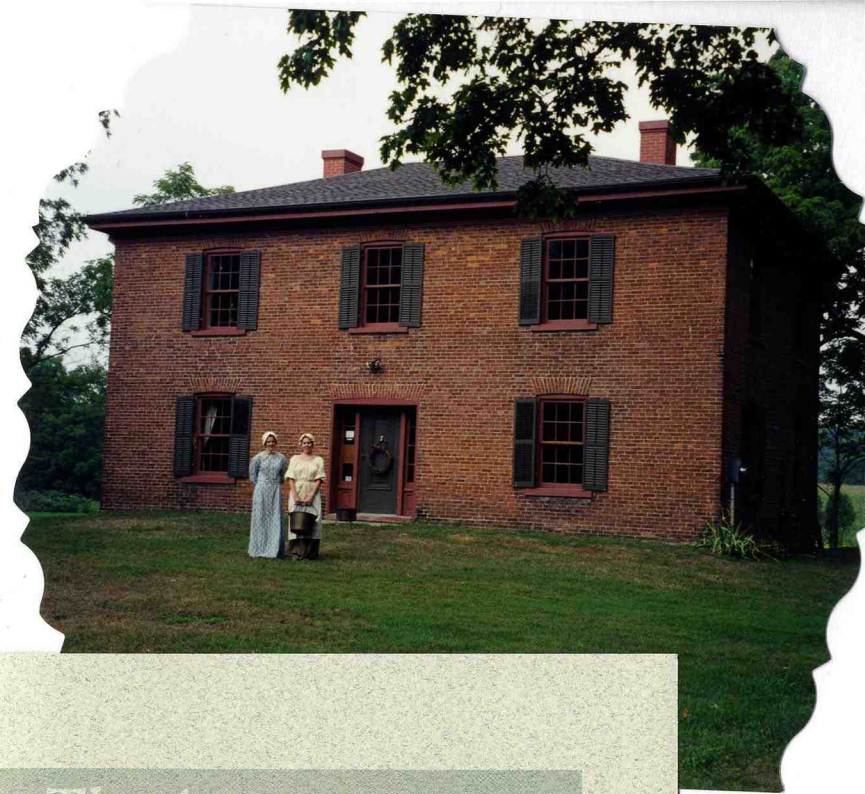
On the Eleventh Hour of the Eleventh Day of the Eleventh Month, the First World War ended. Thousands had died; thousands more had been injured and scarred by their experiences. The men and women who had survived, returned to their homes. For them, though, the world would never be the same. People at home had learned to manage without them and, all over Britain, and its Empire, there were men and women, old beyond their years, trying to fit back into an unrecognizable normality.

Moina Michael, an American War Secretary with the YMCA, and herself a writer of verse, had been moved by McCrae's work, and had written:

*"And now the torch and Poppy red  
Wear in honour of our dead.."*

Miss Michael bought red poppies with money that had been given to her by work colleagues, and wearing one of the poppies she had bought, sold the remainder to her friends to raise a small amount of money for servicemen in need. Her French colleague, a Madame Guerin, encouraged by what Moina Michael had achieved with the poppy emblem, proposed the making of artificial poppies, and their sale, to help ex-servicemen and their dependents. So the movement started.





## The Society

The Tyrconnell Heritage Society has agreed with the Ministry of Natural Resources to restore the historic Backus-Page House and its farming environment.

The society was founded in 1993 to save the house and create a regional cultural center based on the period 1850 to 1890. At present the society is in the process of restoring the house and grounds and is fundraising to be able to continue with the project. Our goal is a living history museum with hands-on activities to enhance the educational experience of our visitors.

The Tyrconnell Heritage Society opens the Backus-Page House from June to September each summer. The Society

also opens the home for special

occasions during the rest of the year. To book a tour, call (519) 762-3072.

## The House

The first settlers that were granted land by Colonel Talbot were established along Lake View Line in Dunwich Township, where the Backus-Page House is located. The first pioneers who came in 1809 were the Pattersons, Pearce and Storey families. They were followed by Stephen Backus in 1810. Stephen's son, Andrew constructed the home in 1850. It was one of the first brick dwellings in Dunwich Township. 72,000 bricks were made on the property from clay retrieved from the ravine at the back of the house. The walls in the house are four and five bricks thick.

The front door and door bell, the window panes and shutters, and black ash, white pine, and tulip floors throughout the home are original. The pantry features a dumbwaiter which brought items up from the cellar.

The farm was called "Lakeview" when Mary-Jane and Andrew Backus lived there. All the trees were felled in front of the house so the family could admire the majestic waters of Lake Erie. Mary-Jane and Andrew raised a family of 12 children there.

## The Area

Other tourist attractions include John E. Pearce Provincial Park: the only public park composed of mixed deciduous Carolinian forest overhanging the bluffs of Lake Erie. Donated in 1955 and expanded in 1965, the park boasts numerous rare plant species and some of the most beautiful scenery in Southwestern Ontario. The Spicer Trail is the latest addition to the park. Developed by Lorne Spicer, the trail has 29 different species of trees plaqued for nature lover's enjoyment. It consists of three different lengths of trails to accommodate all ages and abilities.

A stones throw from Backus-Page House is St. Peter's Anglican Church, which has been in continuous use since 1827. Area families donated all the time, money and labour that went into its construction. The cemetery there is the final resting place of "Lake Erie Baron", Colonel Thomas Talbot.



# Elgin Volunteer featured in Valentine's Cabaret

Emerson Thorne's essential quality as a community volunteer is apparent even to a child.

Watching Thorne help renovate the WEDS Performing Arts Centre in Dutton two years ago, eight-year-old Charlotte Schaecken dubbed him "the man who is always prepared."

Thorne will be performing in the hall he helped transform on Feb. 16 for the annual Valentine's Cabaret, a wine-and-cheese reception and musical variety show. Co-sponsored by the West Elgin Choral Society (WECS), of which Thorne is a member, and the Kiwanis Club, the program features songs and recitations from the musical stage. Almost half of the 96 available tickets have already sold since going on sale Jan. 2, a testament to the popularity of last year's fund-raiser which also included Thorne playing trumpet.

There have been few arts events in this part of Elgin County that haven't involved Thorne in some way since he and his wife Dawn retired to Wallacetown six years ago. Those who have worked with him can attest to the quality Schaecken observed.

Mary Lou Heidt, coordinator at Shenanigans, chairperson of the West Elgin Dramatics Society and one of handful of faithful volunteers who worked every Saturday for two years to renovate the performing arts centre, has nothing but praise for Thorne's support and commitment to the community projects he's been involved in.

"If he says he's going to do something, you can count on him," she says of Thorne's contributions to the performing arts centre, to WEDS, and to Shenanigans.

While Thorne is a skilled woodworker (he made the



**Emerson Thorne a feature at Valentine Cabaret**

apron for the stage in the performing arts centre, the console for the sound equipment in the Dutton Community Centre and the display case for the Wallacetown United Church, among others), a graphics professional (he designs all the ads and posters for WECS events, he created the logo for Shenanigans and is doing one for the Municipality of Dutton-Dunwich), and a talented musician (he sings bass and plays trumpet), his best attribute is his personality, says Heidt.

Thorne's reliability, dedication and unwavering support inspire confidence in others and this makes for more successful community ventures, she says.

"I don't think the hall would have come together without him," says Heidt.

When Heidt was drafting plans for the creation of

Shenanigans, a business to be run by four developmentally challenged adults, Thorne helped with renovations to the business office and created signs and display cases for the shop.

"More important, he was there for me to bounce ideas off. He and Dawn were there with ideas and support. That made it happen," she says.

"And he's fun!" she adds. "He has a good sense of humour."

Martin Joldersma, father to the observant Schaecken and the person who spearheaded renovations at the arts centre, had his own observations of the man he first met in an impromptu choir assembled to sing at a funeral.

"He's very supportive, positive person. He's straightforward, an honest, forthright person."

Thorne, a Toronto-based executive who once headed up the credit card division at Shell Canada, knew the Wallacetown area well before moving here. He and Dawn had been frequent guests of Don and Marion Page and had been to the elimination dance, the Dutton Downhill Derby and the Wallacetown Fair.

"This (community) became the benchmark when we were looking around for place to retire," says Thorne. "And nothing compared."

The Thornes purchased a small farm on Ash Line south of Wallacetown six years ago. They have no regrets.

"Quite the opposite," says Emerson. "It's been great fun. We had no experience with rural life and we find the people great."

As for the community activities that keep him busy, Thorne says he can't help himself.

"I think whatever your work habits have been in your working life, after you retire, those habits continue. You're just doing it in a different place."

Thorne, who has played trumpet since a child growing up in the Salvation Army, hasn't chosen his repertoire for the Feb. 16 program. However, if Schaecken's observations are at all correct, he'll be prepared.

The Valentine Cabaret, February 16 at the WEDS Performing Arts Centre, Dutton, starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25 each or \$160 for a table of eight and include hor d'oeuvres and the first glass of wine.

Proceeds go to the West Elgin Choral Society and the Kiwanis Club.

Tickets are available at Shenanigans, 159B Main St., Dutton, 762-5662, or from choir or Kiwanis members.