

MUNICIPAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE DEPUTATION

2013 HERITAGE CONSERVATION AWARD – SAUGEEN RAIL TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Tracey Edwards, Secretary

Mayor Smith, Members of Council, Staff, Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am pleased to be here this evening representing the Saugeen Shores Municipal Heritage Committee to present **The Municipal Heritage Conservation Award**. This award is presented in recognition of heritage minded individuals within Saugeen Shores. We seek nominations from the public by requesting their nomination of individuals that are involved in conserving our heritage either by protecting our original buildings, surroundings or through educating others. The Committee received nominations in late spring and used the following criteria in making our recommendation. We consider individuals who:

1. Voluntarily promote the importance of preserving significant heritage structures;
2. Those who show leadership in restoration and preservation of heritage buildings, sites, etc.;
3. Acknowledge individuals for long standing service in an organization dedicated to maintaining heritage locations;
4. Or show appreciation for personal collections of local artifacts, heritage photographs or memorabilia – which they share with the community to promote appreciation of heritage.

The Saugeen Rail Trail Association was nominated by Gerry and Tracy Lambert. The Lamberts felt the Association has a group of volunteers dedicated to the preservation, maintenance and enhancement of the abandoned CN rail line, which in itself is rich in history. They have also preserved heritage by creating a viewing platform at the Hurricane Hazel crash site in Southampton, and constructing a mock train station (washroom) in Port Elgin. We are very fortunate to have such a committed group of volunteers to make our community a healthier, happier place to live and play, as well as preserving heritage in Saugeen Shores.

The Association is an interested group of volunteer citizens and user organizations dedicated to the operation and maintenance of the Trail. Volunteer labour, community funding and memberships continue to maintain and build the Trail.

The Committee is comprised of: Gerry Boucher; Bruce Alexander; Dave Cheer; Marguerite Wattenburg; Larry Van Wormer; Joyce Scammell; and Sue Glass.

Background

Built in the late 1860's and early 1870's the Wellington Grey Bruce Railway served the communities of Southampton and Port Elgin by transporting local products and people to other Ontario cities. Later, it was taken over by the Canadian National Railway and the main line and newer spur lines continued rail service for well over 100 years.

Eventually, the decline in the rail service led the CN to begin decommissioning rail lines and selling them off. A dedicated group of volunteers founded the Saugeen Rail Trail Association in 1990, and it was with the Association prompting that Port Elgin (1992) and Saugeen Township (1993) acquired the railway section of the then unused rail bed. Subsequently, a plan was put in place that opened up the Saugeen Rail Trail officially on July 5, 1995. After further negotiation, Southampton purchased their section of the rail bed in 1997.

Train Wreck

Hurricane Hazel began its path of destruction October 5, 1954 in the Caribbean Ocean and continued up the east coast of North American before moving inland reaching Ontario on October 16, to be downgraded from its hurricane status. The heavy rains and strong winds persisted causing major flooding damage with loss of life in the Province.

As Train #179 approached its terminus at Southampton around 11:30 p.m., tragedy struck. When crossing a culvert, flooded by the heavy rains from Hurricane Hazel, the track gave way causing the engine to derail. The remaining cars drove into the back of the derailed engine causing it to burst filling the cab with live steam. Engineer Gordon McCallum and fireman Stewart Nicholson were killed in the accident. The remaining crew, who were unhurt, rushed to the aid of the two men who were taken to the Southampton hospital where they succumbed shortly thereafter to their injuries. Dr. Murray Flock attended at the scene.

The crew who accompanied McCallum and Nicholson on this ill-fated trip were Conductor Arthur Sherlock of Southampton, Baggage Man Raymond Darragh of Southampton, Brakeman Cecil Christmann of Port Elgin and Mail Clerks George Hills and Doug Sharman. Two passengers on the train were Mrs. W. Whittaker who suffered shoulder injuries and Kenneth Diebel, both of Southampton.

The Memorial Garden on the Saugeen Rail Trail marks the location of the accident and remembers the two trainmen who lost their lives that day.



River Street Washroom

In the fall of 2011, the Association partnered with the Town and the Saugeen District Secondary School to build an accessible washroom and historical centre. The washroom was built as a replica to the original Port Elgin Train Station that was removed. The SDSS students, under the guidance of their teacher Bud Halpin, built this beautiful building, equipped with a historical information display, to educate trail users and the like on the history of the CN Rail System.



The Saugeen Rail Trail Association and all their Volunteers are to be congratulated for the work they do.

Would you please come forward and receive the 2013 Municipal Heritage Conservation Award.