

The Pioneer Club and the Pioneer Museum (A brief history)

For several years some residents of the Cloyne area had been concerned that their pioneer history was being lost for all time, so two people decided to take action. In 1972 Elsie Snider and Nadine Brumell, over coffee at the kitchen table, formulated a plan to preserve that history for future generations and asked other interested citizens to join them. From this modest beginning a group called *The Pioneer Club* was formed. The first meeting was held Monday, October 15, 1973 in the Barrie Township hall with 20 people in attendance. Arleigh Maitland was elected president and Nadine Brumell secretary-treasurer. It was decided that meetings would be held on the third Monday of every month, that it be a social club as well as a working body. In fact, one of the artifacts of the club is a wooden box, perhaps constructed by Alf Wickware and designed to hold cards for playing euchre.

The project uppermost in the minds of Pioneer Club members was the production of a book comprised of interviews, poetry and historical data from the folk of the area and, with sheer hard work and a grant from the federal government's *New Horizons* programme, they compiled an enormous amount of information and published it in a book entitled *The Oxen and the Axe*, now so familiar to us all. The book proved so popular that it was necessary to produce a second edition in 1975 and is now in its fourth printing. As well as chronicling the history of the past, *The Oxen and the Axe* has proved to be a constant source of information and funding.

In 1978 the club produced a second book, *Unto These Hills* which, at present, is out-of-print.

In 1980/81 club members took on a much, much larger project - the construction of a museum to house the collection of artifacts they had been accumulating. With another federal government *New Horizons* grant and the help of the community, a one-room log museum was built, nestled in the pines of the park beside the Barrie Township hall. Proudly, the Pioneer Club filled the building with artifacts and written histories and opened the Pioneer Museum to the public on July 1, 1982. For several years the Pioneer Club continued to meet socially and to gather artifacts and information for the Pioneer Museum, and volunteers kept the museum open to the public throughout the summer months.

In 2001 it was decided to revitalize the club with a new name and involve a much broader catchment area. The name was changed and *The Cloyne and District Historical Society* was born, a not-for-profit organization with charitable organization status. While the *Society* looks somewhat different today, it still keeps the original mandate of the Pioneer Club. The *C&DHS* now encompasses communities and the countryside from Griffith in the north, to Ompah in the east, Flinton in the west and Kaladar in the south. Pleas went out to all of these for any information and artifacts of historical importance to be donated to the Pioneer Museum for preservation. And material poured in! Soon the small building was overflowing, so with a little trepidation but a great deal of support from area businesses and families, the decision was made to expand the museum.

With this plan in mind the Historical Society went into fundraising mode. Huge events were held both for the sake of raising money and for their historical value. The Sawyer- Stoll reunion in August 2001 brought hundreds of people to the grounds of the museum and Barrie Township hall. In the spring of 2002 construction began on an addition to the museum, a tremendous undertaking only made possible by contributions of time and money by area businesses, families and, most of all, volunteer labour. A grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation was of great assistance in the renovation and outfitting of the original museum structure.

In June, 2003, the Cloyne and District Historical Society opened its spacious new addition to the Pioneer Museum by throwing a huge celebration called *The Lumbermen's Picnic*, reviving memories of the memorable lumbermen's picnics held in Cloyne in the late 1940s. Again, hundreds of people flocked to the museum and surrounding areas to take part in the celebrations.

Today the Cloyne and District Historical Society is an important part of area life, constantly hosting events of historical interest to the community. These events assist in financing the operation of the museum and the continuous gathering of historical information and artifacts for safekeeping.

From June through October the newly enlarged Pioneer Museum attracts visitors from near and far. It employs two students each season and brings business to, and awareness of, the history of our area to both residents and visitors.