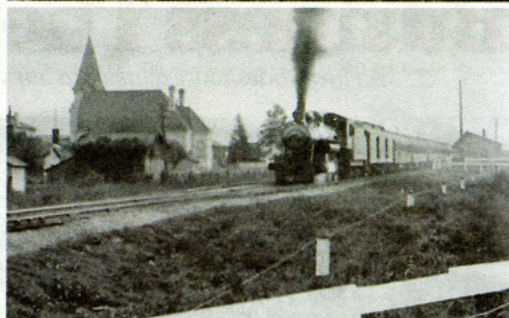


*February 11, 2009*



# *Reflections*

*A New Hamburg Independent Heritage Edition*







# Preserving the past for future generations

*New Dundee WI takes on huge task of digitizing history books*

DOUG COXSON  
Independent staff

Any effort designed to reach future generations and inspire those generations to value and preserve the past will have to accommodate the dramatic shift away from traditional forms of print media.

Knowing this, the New Dundee Women's Institute is in the process of creating a legacy gift to the community by transferring the group's Tweedsmuir history books to digital print and photographs for display on a publicly-accessible website.

WI members, led by Tweedsmuir curator Marilyn Sararas, began to research the cost, financing options and ways they could go about preserving the Tweedsmuir in a digitized form before marking the group's 100th anniversary in 2007. The New Dundee WI set a budget of \$23,000 to complete the project and contributed \$10,000 at the outset.

Before now, the Tweedsmuir histories were rarely seen by members of the public.

"There was access to the Tweedsmuir but it was fairly limited," Sararas says. "We stored them in people's homes. Some were quite fragile and old and we had concerns about how they were handled."

"I've had these books stored in my closet for five years and really saw the value of making them publicly accessible."

Creating digital versions of the Tweedsmuir

changes everything.

To get the process off the ground, the WI partnered with the Township of Wilmot and Our Ontario — a division of Knowledge Ontario, a government organization that provides free assistance to Heritage Organizations attempting to get historical content online.

The group purchased a large-format scanner to accommodate the large-scrapbook size pages in each of the volumes. Then they began looking for a project manager to take on the extensive task of scanning close to 30 books filled with news clippings, hand-written accounts, documents and photographs detailing the history of the area.

Heritage Wilmot contributed \$3,000 to the project on behalf of the Township of Wilmot.

"The partnership has been the key to getting this off the ground," Sararas says. "This has just been a really fantastic example of teamwork."

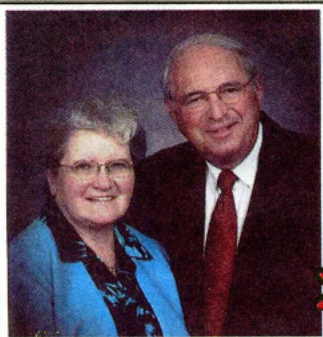
By partnering with the township, the group was also granted free use of the Ralph Shantz Resource Room, including unlimited access to the archives, a computer, fax machine and phone. Once the project is complete the WI is donating the large-format scanner to the township in gratitude.

Castle Kilbride curator Tracy Loch is looking forward to the day when township residents can drop by and access the Tweedsmuir documents and everything else the Sir Adam Beck Archives has to offer. "It's going to be great

Continued on page 19

New Dundee Women's Institute Tweedsmuir curator Marilyn Sararas and digitization project manager Corey Everett stand with Everett's tools of the trade, a large-format scanner and a laptop computer. She is using them to create digital files of all of the local Tweedsmuir history books.

DOUG COXSON, INDEPENDENT STAFF



Viola and Vernon Erb  
Founders of Erb Transport



Thank you to all of the great employees who have been a part of our company's story over the last five decades - we couldn't have done it without you!



Vernon learns to drive the tractor on his family farm in Wellesley



The first trucking purchase: a dump truck

Erb Transport Celebrates 50 Years of Service, Satisfaction and Success - from our early beginnings in Wellesley to our modern fleet across North America

## TOWN SQUARE PHARMACY

*Serving New Hamburg & area since 1996*

- \* Prescription Service
- \* Vitamins & Herbal Products
- \* Health & Beauty Care Products
- \* Cosmetics, Fragrances & Gifts
- \* Carlton Cards
- \* Partyware

100 Mill St., New Hamburg

Hours: Mon.-Wed. 9-6; Thurs-Fri. 9-8; Saturday 9-5

**519-662-9995**

*Wheelchair & stroller accessible*

Friendly, courteous service.

LIVE WELL WITH

**PHARMASAVE**



## Lady Tweedsmuir's legacy

The very first Women's Institute was organized in 1897 in Wentworth County with a mandate to promote better home-making and good citizenship. This organization has grown to be the largest rural organization for women in the world.

The focus now is for personal growth through education and to support and identify needs in the community — the motto being "Rural Ontario Sharing Education."

In the mid 1930's, Lady Tweedsmuir, wife of Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor General of Canada, took a great interest in the Women's Institutes in this country. She stressed the need for preserving the history of the Canadian people and suggested that Ontario Women's Institute Branches keep local history books. In 1940 she was delighted to approve these histories, named after her husband and so originated "The Tweedsmuir Village History Books."

Tweedsmuir History Books capture, record and preserve local community history in a variety of formats. They vary in form from a simple scrapbook to an elaborate leather-bound volume secured with a key. They are comprised of a variety of information which includes the history of the local Women's Institute, earliest settlers in the area, agricultural practices and history of family farms in the area, history of businesses and industries that form the basis of the community, history of local churches, schools, community centres etc. They record local personalities and happenings, war veterans and much, much more.

The New Dundee Institute took this mandate from Lady Tweedsmuir very seriously. In 1940 the group of women began compiling their own local history books. Today, the New Dundee collection contains over 21 albums and records over 175 years of history.

## Education focus of project

FROM page 14

here," she says, referring to the shelf of books and the newly-acquired microfilm collection of New Hamburg Independents. "We are slowly, but surely building a great room there."

Sarasas says it's their hope the scanner will be used to help the township move forward with its goal of digitizing the contents of the Sir Adam Beck Archives and future Tweedsmuir history books.

Tweedsmuir histories from New Hamburg and Haysville have been included in the project, but those volumes represent just a fraction of what will soon be available online to anyone with a computer and access to the internet.

New Dundee's Tweedsmuir collection alone comprises more than 21 bound volumes. Sarasas attributes the vast collection to a group of key players on the WI who have a great interest in local history and were simply committed to the task of documenting it over the years.

When Castle Kilbride curator Tracy Loch heard about the WI's plans, she immediately knew the best person to help them achieve their ambitious project.

Former curatorial co-op student at the Castle, Corey Everett graduated from Western Ontario with a Masters Degree in Public History, with a specialization in digital history.

With a degree in public history, Everett says she has the knowledge to inform groups like the WI on how to improve public communication about heritage efforts and help "unbutton the history button."

Surrounded by local history since October, Everett has been scanning each page individually and using an optical character recognition program to digitize the text. Using the program Photoshop Elements, she enhances each image before saving it.

"I feel like I'm from here because I read about everybody's stories," says the Cambridge resident, excited to be working on a project directly related to her degree.

In the end, the digitized collection will be kept in a variety of formats including DVDs and microfilm with a life expectancy of up to

500 years. All of the information will ultimately be uploaded to a website hosted by Our Ontario.

OurOntario.ca boasts a state-of-the-art discovery portal that allows people to search across hundreds of sites in seconds, making it easy to find audio, video, text, government documents, images and collections about Ontario, or from an Ontario organization like the New Dundee WI.

Before the government project was initiated a few years ago, a project like the WI's would have cost thousands. With the help of Our Ontario, the group has cut their costs in half.

Our Ontario is also using the WI project to boost their technology and should allow the group to upload full-book scans once they're ready, Everett says.

Ultimately Everett will develop educational programming to match what's on the website and enhance the history curriculum in local schools. One possibility for the project includes

developing "smart boards" — interactive, touch-screen displays that combine text and images to engage classrooms in a variety of activities.

"This ties into the Grade 1 and 2 curriculum very well," says Sarasas, a former teacher. "That's a main focus for us."

In high school, the view the Tweedsmuir's give of the changing local economy could easily be incorporated into the curriculum.

The huge project is still looking for community support to help finance the full cost, something Sarasas says hasn't been an obstacle so far.

"There really seems to be a lot of excitement and public support."

Individuals wishing to receive tax receipts for donations of \$20 or more can make their cheques payable to the NEW DUNDEE COMMUNITY TRUST FUND — TWEEDSMUIR PROJECT.

For more information contact president Joanne Rush, 519-696-2844, treasurer Janet Passmore, 519-632-8969, Tweedsmuir committee-chair Marilyn Sarasas, 519-696-3061, Judy Rivers 519-696-3081, or Trudy Huggins 519-742-6240.



## Times certainly have changed.

There have been many changes over the 54 years since Zehr Insurance had it's beginning.

One very important thing has not changed, however.

Zehr Insurance Brokers still offers a comprehensive program for all your insurance needs that will ensure peace of mind and satisfaction for you and your family.

*"Protecting what matters to you"*

**ZEHR**  
INSURANCE BROKERS LTD.

59 Huron St., New Hamburg  
**519-662-1710**

*In Tavistock see us at*  
24 Hope St. W.  
**519-655-2422**

*In Milverton see us at*  
30 Main St. S.  
**519-595-8201**

*In Waterloo see us at*  
279 Weber St. N., Unit 16  
**519-746-5900**

*In Moncton see us at*  
9 Maddison St.  
**519-347-2733**