

THE WELLS DUO

A Passion for the Preservation of the Past

By Diann Turner

As the hands of time slowly, imperceptibly move, our lives are full of stories; lives unfolding, wings waiting to take flight. Inevitably, it seems that most of us are nothing but a dash between the year of our birth and the year of our death on some obscure record. Fortuitously, there are people like David and Sandra Wells who see intrinsic value in community back stories and have admirably devoted themselves to the preservation of the past. The husband and wife duo launched their third book, "Days Gone By: A People's History" in October, 2018. Convinced that small communities are losing vital links with the past, and one another, David and Sandra sensed an inner urge to pull small town facts into one spot. Newspapers were a strong community voice from every hamlet and frequently, ladies were correspondents, sending in neighbourhood snippets of information. The advent of the internet and social media news feeds quickly suppressed the need for this and with sad, depleted emotions we've watched the disappearance of many newspapers.

Small wonder older gentlemen like John Dickey are ecstatic about David and Sandra's books, applauding their enormous capacity to give! With the passing of years, all of us realize now is the time to speak; our voices will one day be silent. "Fact, Folklore & Fiction: The History of Mallorytown", "The Last Front", and "Days Gone By" do not contain persiflage. They're stories that connect dots, preserve the past, hand down legends, fill in family trees, unite people and identify personalities. It is a crucial labour of love on the part of the Wells duo, equivalent to labelling old family photographs that millennials quickly trash because no one named the faces.

David grew up in the village of Mallorytown. He assured me it was a great place to grow up, without a shortage of things to do with two baseball teams in the summer and two hockey teams in winter. One catalyst that fed his passion was a book written by Tom Massey, "Truth, Half Truth & Damn Lies",

tales of the St. Lawrence River and fishing. Another impetus for both David and Sandra was the 2008 Mallorytown Consolidated/Continuation School reunion, which attracted unprecedented interest and invoked hundreds of questions. Reluctant, Dave began the arduous task of collecting information, photos and memorabilia; Sandra was the willing collaborator. The first draft completed, Dave contacted Kemptville, On. publisher, Terry Meagher, still asking himself "Who wants to read this?" Terry perused the material, responded with "You've got something here!" and 350 copies rolled off the press. Book one is in its sixth printing; book two in its second, and book three printed with 500 copies.

Motivation for the Wells' was less complicated than the grunt work. If the project flopped, all the information would be an asset to the Mallorytown Coach House and Museum. Deeper incentive involved ongoing projects at the Coach House. The Wells' laid out all initial costs self-sacrificially and net proceeds from all three books flow to the Coach House. David carried the tremendous burden of knowing he was the logical person to write the books; he was always interested in community, thrived on hearing people's stories, received part of his education in Hodge's Store and Buell's Store, participated in Council, church, sports and the Oddfellows. Trips to the Genealogical Society in Brockville, letters to the Editor of local papers requesting pictures and information, meeting people and probing their pasts devoured hours. To their astonishment, pictures and stories came out of the woodwork! Documenting all of it, lest it be lost, preoccupied David and Sandra as they poured over the details. David knew they would spark interest! "Re-kindling memories, that's what it's all about," said David. **LH**



Above: Dave and Sandra Wells

Below: Mallorytown Coach House. Just one of the subjects and interests of David and Sandra

Bottom: Wells books on Mallorytown and History



Visit www.davewells.ca for further information. The books are \$20.00 each and are available at Front of Yonge Public Library, Front of Yonge Township Office, Heritage Clock Shop in Brockville, Village Store in Athens, and Northern Soul BBQ on Lake Street.