



Image Credit: Diann Turner



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Lyn Heritage Museum – On the Outside (left) and the front view (right)

# LYN HERITAGE PLACE MUSEUM

## One Man's Architectural Legacy

By Diann Turner

I pulled up to the Lyn Museum on a Spring afternoon this year and found myself drawn in, at once, by a myriad of interesting things. Curbside appeal was fantastic! There was history in the air, and more! A polished 1950 Ford Custom Deluxe car was parked outside. The museum, a brick edifice enhanced by stone, wagon wheels, old implements, fences, spoked windows and a welcoming front porch, instantly piqued my curiosity. Inside, I was welcomed by two dedicated volunteers: John Mack and Patricia (Mrs. Orval) Ladd. I was pleasantly overwhelmed by their affable welcome, and the inspiring, esthetic museum, with its ingenious rooms and eclectic collections. I was in for a history lesson in a town I had only breezed through for decades with nary a thought for what had gone on before. It was time to slow down and acquaint myself with this place!

The inception of Lyn Heritage Museum and its evolvement is owed almost entirely to Orval Leslie Ladd, born September 28, 1930 in the village of Lyn. He spent his entire life here. In his school years, Orval began to fancy a cute little girl riding to school on a little bicycle. He married Patricia Clow in 1953. They raised four children and guarded their romance as if it were a precious jewel. Orval loved building things and constructed

several unique houses. Continually inspired by Popular Mechanics magazine, his dwellings became masterpieces of creativity combined with the restoration of relics.

In 1999, this building was a derelict, abandoned garage and a business venue for Stewart's Bus Line, followed by Howard's Bus Line. At one time, gas pumps out front served the community but at this point, it was a less than auspicious pigeon palace. That is, until September, when visionary Orval, not inclined to velleity, saw potential everyone else overlooked. A retired salesman from Myer's Pumps, the artistic, energetic, gifted man rolled up his sleeves and got to work! The self-taught electrician, dabster, carpenter and mason recruited volunteers. He had just entered his seventies and understood preserving Lyn's history could only be realized if a dedicated place was created that could incorporate salvaged materials, pictures and stories. He wanted the town's original flour mill, long since torn down, to be the central fixture in the museum's design. Orval completed seventy-five percent of the grunt stone work to accomplish this feat and the visual beauty of it is stellar.

Orval's philosophy was indeed an admirable one: "Why should I chase a golf ball around a field when I can be productive?"

Lyn was founded in 1748 by United Empire Loyalist, Abel Coleman and his brother, Richard. Obtaining a land grant, Abel built the mill in 1788 and named the area Coleman's Corners. After several years, the mill began to prosper and thriving businesses began to spring up, including tanneries, saw mills, brick works, a shoe factory, a last factory, a foundry, a blacksmith shop, woolen mill, flax mill, bakeries, cheese factories, stores and five hotels. The town became Lowell in 1837 and was changed to Lyn in 1838, which is a Scottish word for waterfall. The Grand Trunk Railway had a station in Lyn and the Brockville Westport line had a station below the mill that ran from 1886 to 1949. The Colemans bought water rights and dams were installed in Graham, Temperance and Centre Lakes to supply enough water to run the mills. A canal was hand dug from Centre Lake to Lee's Pond. Churches were built, and schools sprang to life.

In its heyday, Lyn had more industry than nearby Brockville. However, change was inevitable and with the advent of electricity, Lyn's manufacturing base slowly dwindled into obsolescence. Decades began to blur details, generations passed on. A school reunion in Lyn, circa 1998, drew one thousand people, floods of stories and a

mess of pictures. It was then that Orval began envisioning a museum that would display the everyday accoutrements of days gone by.

"Howard's Bus Line was going to tear the building down," said Pat Ladd, "but donated it instead to the already existing Lyn Heritage Committee." In July 2000 the museum opened to the public. People must have been overcome when they saw Orval's skilled craftsmanship. His labour of love paid off and Pat is to be credited to this day for giving Orval permission to "live" at the museum!

I naively thought I could zip through the museum, but two hours later, I was still scribbling. Pat passed on memories to me which were not just of her own past, but of the history that surrounded it. She rode on a sleigh that her grandfather drove to the mill, loaded with grain to be ground into flour. She skated on the mill pond in winter and picnicked beside it in summer. She remembers druggist, C.M. Taylor, and led me to the table and chairs from his Ice Cream Parlour. She shared that during WWI, soldiers marched through Lyn on the Ottawa-Kingston route, and camped here overnight.

In WWII, soldiers trained down by Lyn Pit. Fires in Lyn were frequent. John Mack said that a self-driving wood-fired steam thresher rolled through town one year, threw sparks and buildings went up in flames. The former schoolhouse, still standing, was two roomed, with grades 1-4 on one level, 5-8 on another. Joe Hudson did an egg project in high school and went on to develop Burnbrae farms, now Canada wide. The Mallorytown Telephone Exchange was once across the street from where the museum is today.

The financial contributions of various local people were integral; Harold and Betty Krugel, of Harold's Demolition, generously donated \$50,000. Following Harold's passing, Beverly took an interest in the museum and donated her time and money. Another local lady left her entire estate to the museum. Burnbrae Farms donated enough for the upstairs room to be completed and Mary Hudson's name graces an egg-shaped sign. Trillium grants funded the stair lift and the ramp walkway.

A self-guided tour is available and walks you through the various rooms and displays.

These include Orval's Room, where his incredible scale model of the village as a thriving business centre commands attention; The Krugel Extension; The Pioneer Room (remembering our past); The Mary Hudson Room; The Walkway; and the Blacksmith's Shop (which comes alive with a blast of heat). Combined, these rooms tell tales of a bustling industrial town where multiple churches filled with worshipers, school houses that educated children, mills and factories employed people. Inevitable progress ripped through the area; the automobile replaced the trains, electricity superseded water power, technology surged and what was, became a distant memory. Museums educate future generations and bring clarity to the past. Pioneers laid the foundation for the life we enjoy today.

Thank heavens for folks like Orval and Pat Ladd, the donors, and all the volunteers for this storehouse of memorabilia. Orval's efforts prove that it is not what we take from this life when we leave that matters, it is what we leave behind. The museum welcomes any photographs or artifacts that you may have, which could be of historical value. **LH**



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**Above:** Orval Ladd, Founder

**Above Middle:**

**Pat Ladd, Widow of Orval Ladd & Volunteer at Lyn Museum**

**Above Right:** Orval Ladd's Scale Model of Lyn In Its Heyday

**Right:** John Mack, Volunteer at Lyn Museum

**Far Right:** John Mack's 1950 Ford Custom Deluxe Car

**Below:** Cooking in the 19th Century

**Below Middle:** Forge at Lyn Heritage Museum

**Below Right:**

**Lyn Heritage Museum's recent Acquisition, school desks**



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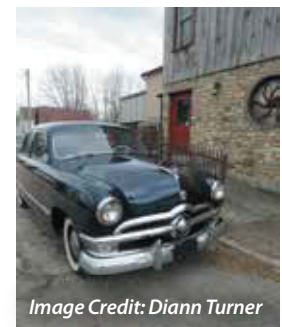


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**Editor's Note:** If you're interested in taking in some of Lyn's historical past, their hours are: Sundays, 1:00pm to 4:00pm, from the end of May - September, or by appointment @ 613-342-3785. Their website is [www.lyneritagemuseum.com](http://www.lyneritagemuseum.com)