



Restored Lighthouse on Windmill Point originally built in 1820's

THE MANY FACES OF THE WINDMILL

By Joan Rupert-Barkley

The stone tower that overlooks the St. Lawrence River and is located just 3 km east of Prescott at Windmill Point (Off Windmill Rd) is almost two hundred years old and if the walls could talk they would certainly have some historical tales to tell. Over the years, this structure has undergone many different facelifts.

The lighthouse was built in the 1820's and was originally a windmill that grinded grain into flour and feed for the animals. In November 1838, a group of more than 200 rebels landed at Windmill Point in an attempt to overthrow the British rule in Canada. More than 2,000 British soldiers and militia surrounded them and a bloody battle followed and forced the rebels into the windmill and surrounding stone buildings. Within the next couple of days,

British gunboats and field guns opened fire. Without medical, food or ammunition supplies, the rebels had no other choice but to surrender. In 1872, the tower was transformed into a lighthouse by the Federal Government and it remained in service until 1978.

After that the building was locked and empty for many years until a group of students led by Paul Fortier opened the doors for one summer. This eventually led to the formation of the Friends of the Windmill. This volunteer non-profit group opened the stone lighthouse tower to the public as the Battle of the Windmill National Historic Site in the 1990's. This group is in partnership with Parks Canada. The group holds fundraising yard sales twice a year and some of the special activities that have taken

place at the site over the years include pirate days, kite days and re-enactments. The site was designated a Heritage Lighthouse under the Heritage Lighthouse Act in 2014. Due to structural concerns, the site was also closed for renovations that same year.

It took approximately 13 months to complete the renovations. The major restorations were financed by government grants. The cost of the repairs was more than \$400,000.00. The work that was done by Hubbard and Company of Spencerville, ON, included repairing all the cracks in mortar and stone, replacing all the wooden structure and repairing the roof. The cedar rail fences were also replaced and the grounds were cleaned up by volunteers.

"Everyone should be able to visit and learn about the history and the role the windmill played in Canadian History," commented Barry Brown, president of the Friends of the Windmill.

According to Brown, there are a number of people who visit the windmill every year. There is a large number who go through the mill but, there are many more who just visit the site to read the historical information on the interpretive plaques, or to take a stroll down the winding trail to the river. Picnic tables and benches are also set up for visitors.

The windmill will be open to the public this summer. The hours are from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Thursday through Monday (closed Tuesday and Wednesday). Thanks to a student grant, a summer student has been hired to be on site. This will allow visitors to enter the structure and see the history that is on display and all the renovations that have taken place.

The reception area of the windmill includes; a book and gift display area. Spectators will also see a video depicting the history of the windmill, as well as the new story boards, before heading upstairs to enjoy a spectacular view of the St. Lawrence River from 2 different levels. [LH](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE: A great part of our local history and Canadian history that is often not learned about in schools. Definitely worth a visit along with a stop at Fort Wellington in Prescott. A great way to spend an afternoon and even have a picnic on the grounds of the Windmill with your family and enjoy the view of the St. Lawrence River.