



*The lighthouse is ready for visitors.
Photo Credit: Ross Batstone*

COMMEMORATING 180 YEARS OF THE BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL

By Lisa Crandall

The Battle of the Windmill took place in November of 1838, making this year the 180th anniversary of one of the few military skirmishes that has taken place on Canadian soil. The site of this battle is located just outside Prescott and the sturdy stone tower that stood at the center of that fight is an easy-to-get-to and popular tourist attraction. It is known as the Windmill Tower and if visitors look carefully they can still find the dings and dents in the stone walls of the tower. This is evidence of the pitched battle that saw the local militia and British soldiers push back an invading force of 250 Americans.

Located on Windmill Road a few minutes east of Prescott just off County Road 2, the tower is managed on behalf of Parks Canada by a group of local volunteers known as The Friends of the Windmill (FOW). For the past 22 years this group has been working diligently to restore and enhance this piece

of Canadian history. In 2016 they restored the tower's function as a lighthouse, ending 38 years of darkness.

Built in 1822 for use as a grist mill, the 60-foot tower was converted to a light house in 1874 and functioned as a beacon for boats on the St. Lawrence River until it was decommissioned in 1978. Now designated as a Heritage Light House, visitors are welcome to climb the interior stairs and enjoy the views of the river and surrounding countryside. There are also 3 kilometres of groomed trail going east along the river.

As part of the commemorative events for the 2018 season, the FOW is running a poetry contest. The winning poems will be published on promotional bookmarks to be distributed throughout the season as well as receiving a cash prize. The contest is open to Ontario residents living within a 50 km radius of the Windmill Lighthouse Tower. There are two age categories: Junior (age

12 - 18 yrs.) and Adult (19 yrs. and older). The theme of the poem must relate to the 180th anniversary of the Battle of the Windmill. The final date for submissions is April 30th. Contest rules and Information on how to enter can be found on the Facebook page: "Friends of Windmill Point".

In addition, the FOW are looking forward to playing host to Spectres Paranormal Investigations out of Montreal, a group well known for their work in Brockville and Cornwall. According to the group's spokesperson Tina Piorro, they are hoping to find a link to the ghost of Nils Van Shultz (Von Schoultz) (1807 -1838) who has also been linked to Fort Henry (Kingston) where he was convicted and hanged as one of the ringleaders of the failed invasion we recall as the Battle of the Windmill.

As part of their annual fundraising activities the FOW host two garage sales each year,

one in May, at the beginning of the season, and one in September near the end of the season. Funds from these events help to pay for the summer student who will be on hand to answer visitors' questions during the tourist season, as well as helping with improvements the group hopes to make. Plans for the upcoming (May 26th) sale are already well underway.

Work projects for the 2018 season will see a continuing focus on landscaping projects. There are two small gardens near the lighthouse, as well as a plethora of native and naturalized plants along the riverside trail. Jim Devenny, Chair of the Board of FOW, hopes to install trail markers as well as signage identifying local flora along the trail. The flower beds near the tower are a labour of love by volunteers Marg Beatty and Liz Daily. This year they hope to add more shrubs and perennials to the raised beds, lengthening the season's bright colors.

This year the site will be open to the public Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm during June and September. In July and August, the site will be open 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Thursdays through Monday. In commemoration of the 180th Anniversary, admission to the Windmill Tower this season will be by freewill donation. LH



Looking west towards Prescott from an upper window.
Photo Credit: Lisa Crandall



Local history on sale at the lighthouse gifts hop.
Photo Credit: Ross Batstone

A SONG FROM THE BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL

Poetry and the music that turns them into songs have eternally been an element of war memories. "One Tin Soldier" and "Blowing in the Wind" are lingering cultural souvenirs of the Vietnam war era. Vera Lynn's "White Cliffs of Dover" linger in childhood memories of those who grew up after World War I and although they date back to World War II, well known songs like "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" and "White Christmas" continue to linger as well, having possibly lost their war time context. With those songs in mind here is a ballad that comes to us from the archives of the Grenville County Historical Society, "Pioneer People and Places, Early Grenville", Volume 20, October 1988:

"The Song of the Battle of the Windmill"
On Tuesday morning we marched out,
In command of Colonel Fraser,
With swords and by'nets of polished steel,
As keen as any razor.

Unto the Windmill plains we went,
We gave them three loud cheers,
To let them know, that day, below,
We're the Prescott Volunteers.

Oh, we're the boys that feared no noise
When cannons loud did roar,
We cut the rebels left and right
When they landed on our shore.

Brave Macdonell nobly led
His men into the field;
They did not flinch, no, not an inch,
'Till the rebels had to yield.

He swung his sword right round his head,
Saying, "Glengarry's, follow me,
We'll gain the day, without delay,
And that you'll plainly see!"

The rebels now remain at home,
We wish that they would come,
We'd cut them up, both day and night,
By command of Colonel Young/

If e'er they are return again
They'll see what we can do;
We'll show them British play, me boys,
As we did at Waterloo.

Under Captain Jessup we will fight,
Let him go where he will,
With powder and ball, they'll surely fall,
As they did at the Windmill.

If I were like great Virgil bright
I would employ my quill,
I would write both day and night
Concerning the Windmill.

Lest to intrude, I will come lude,
And finish off my song.
We'll pay a visit to Ogdensburg –
And that before it's long.

The author is unknown but it is sung to the tune of the old army marching song, "The Girl I left Behind Me". That tune is still well known and easily accessible online. To my ear it sounds rather like "The Yellow Rose of Texas."