



Jean Brassington appears dwarfed as she stands by the immense Vimy Memorial.

VIMY RIDGE OAK TREE LEGACY

location, but Memorial Park beside the cenotaph has been determined to be more suitable. A fitting commemorative celebration for the planting ceremony will hopefully take place as part of Athens Heritage Society's Canada 150 event in October.

Jean visited the Vimy Memorial and toured the World War I cemeteries and battlefields of northern France and Belgium seven years ago, "It was a life-changing experience," she explains. "I believe it's important to remember the sacrifice of those thousands. It begins at home, in each community which raised those patriotic men who left their homes and families and marched away along our Main Street in uniform to do their duty!"

The 100th Anniversary of Vimy Ridge is being recognized with a variety of speakers and displays in the area. Local carver Tony Endhoven will have his Vimy carving on display at the Coach House in Mallorytown. The noted carver says he decided to honor the Vimy battle in a carving since it was quite an important event for Canada.

The Athens Museum will also be providing a presentation by war expert Rich Lees on April 9th at 2:00 p.m., at the Joshua Bates Center. There will also be a Vimy display included at the Athens Museum this year as well. It is especially important to note that the eleven fallen WWI servicemen listed on the

By Sally Smid

The Battle of Vimy Ridge took place from April 9th - 12th in 1917. Canadian regiments saw action together in a distinctly Canadian triumph, helping create a stronger sense of national identity and raising Canada's international status that helped earn Canada a separate signature on the Treaty of Versailles, which ended WWI. This year marks the 150th anniversary of Canada's Confederation as well as the 100th anniversary of the Vimy Battle.

There is a story that happened following that famous battle when many of the surviving soldiers began to realize the significance of what they had just participated in. One of them was Leslie Miller, a fruit farmer from Milliken, Ontario, a signaler with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He wanted to have a souvenir from the war-torn Ridge. He found a half-buried European oak tree and gathered up a handful of its acorns.

When he returned to Canada, he planted them on his farm, which he named Vimy Oaks Farm. Today, only nine of the original oaks survive, in what is now a church parking lot in Scarborough. But on the Vimy Ridge

site, not a single original oak survived. The Vimy Oaks Legacy Project in Toronto decided to do something about that, in time for Vimy's 100th anniversary. In January of 2015, professional arborists took cuttings from the crowns of Miller's oak trees and grafted them onto hardy Canadian oak root stock. The saplings were then grown by an accelerated process, producing 100 young trees which will be planted at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France.

Another 100 trees were grown with the intention of having them planted in 100 towns in Canada. The first to be planted, will be in Smiths Falls in July, as a pilot project initiated by Blake Seward, the teacher who developed the Canada wide "Lest We Forget" high school course.

Jean Brassington of the Athens Garden Club read about this project and also applied for a Vimy tree. Athens met all of the required guidelines and a tree has been reserved for the village which will only involve the cost of transporting it. The Memory Garden beside the Township Hall, honoring Athens' fallen WWI soldiers was decided to be an unsuitable

Athens cenotaph include Roscoe DeWolfe who was killed in action and whose name appears on the Vimy Memorial. The Athens Vimy oak tree will be planted next to that cenotaph.

Those Vimy soldiers were certainly right in sensing that they had been a part of a very significant Battle that is still remembered and honored 100 years later! **LH**

**Award winning carver,
Tony Endhoven,
holds his carving
honoring the
Battle of Vimy Ridge.**

