



News Release

For Immediate Release

A Piece of Pickering's Past Comes Home

Pickering, ON, Monday, March 17, 2010 Giving Pickering Museum Village volunteers liberty to explore the past, in their own way has brought honour to the museum in an unexpected way. The museum has always been very proud of its volunteer program, and with over 300 volunteers and 10 specialized volunteer clubs, including the Pickering Museum Village Woodwrights' Guild, it has many reasons to be proud. But it is the passion and enthusiasm of one volunteer in particular that has led to the recent acquisition of Rebellion of 1837 Prisoner's Box.

When Darryl Withrow, a member of the PMV Woodwrights' Guild approached Katrina Pyke, now the Coordinator, Museum Operations, about a small project in wood that could be his own, little did either of them know it would lead so far and wide, and would bring a significant piece of Pickering's past back home.

The project Pyke suggested was a replica prisoner's box. Despite the number of Pickering men jailed for participating in the Rebellion of 1837, and the hundreds of trinket boxes carved by those prisoners while incarcerated at the Toronto Jail, the Pickering Museum Village has none in its artifact collection. The boxes reside in other museums and private collections. Pyke wanted to be able to share this piece of material culture with the many Grade 7 and 8 students who visit the museum annually to learn about the ill-fated Rebellion and its results. Pyke got her replica box, and so much more.

Withrow, a skilled woodworker, set out to find just the right box to replicate. His search connected him with Chris Raible, Ontario author of several books on William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion of 1837. Raible himself had undertaken to present an exhibit of a collection of prisoner's boxes he had tracked down from museums and descendants. Withrow's research took him to museums as far north as Simcoe County, as far west as Lambton County, and as far east as Quebec. At each location, he painstakingly photographed each box, measured it and took notes so that he could make a replica as true to the original as possible.

Withrow has now replicated over a dozen of these boxes, of wood matching the originals and complete with silk screening of the actual text carved on the tops and sides. Those words still echo the beliefs of the men who took up arms against the colonial government of the time: words like "liberty" and "equal rights". Withrow gave the museum the requested replica of box in the fall of 2009, and it was immediately pressed into school program service. The rest of the boxes travel with him on speaking engagements he shares with Chris Raible and Dr. John Carter of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. The three men collaborated on a book about these precious pieces of rebellion past, entitled [From Hands Now Striving to Be Free: Boxes Crafted by 1837 Rebellion Prisoners.](#)

Withrow's work with the two historians, to compile and continue to build an inventory of the prisoner's boxes continues, and is the reason for Pickering Museum Village's recent acquisition.

On February 23, Ron Van Horne, Chief Administrative Officer of Lambton County, formally donated a box carved by Asahel Hawley Scott to the Pickering Museum Village. A collector, Van Horne purchased the box several years ago, and has been looking for the right museum to house it. Dr. Carter facilitated the donation, deeming that Scott's ties to Pickering Township meant that Pickering Museum Village is the most appropriate museum to accept it.

"We thank Mr. Van Horne for donating Asahel Scott's box for our community's benefit, and we are proud to showcase this piece of history at the Steam-Up event," said Mayor Dave Ryan. "Heritage matters. This very special carving is a link to Pickering's storied past and will be treasured by future generations to come."

"As the City of Pickering prepares to celebrate its 200th anniversary, the spirits of the Rebellion of 1837 rise up once again," said Councillor Bill Mclean. "The courage of Pickering's ancestors symbolized by carvings on this treasured box crafted while in captivity tells the story of Pickering's illustrious place in the formation of our Canada."

To celebrate the acquisition of Scott's box, staff at Pickering Museum Village are developing an exhibit to tell the story of Pickering's involvement in the Rebellion of 1837. The jewel in the crown of this exhibit will be Asahel Scott's box. The exhibit will open May 30, 2010 at the Steam-Up event.

The museum village would greatly appreciate any information from the public on the Asahel H. Scott family. By 1846, the Scott family had emigrated to the United States. Readers are encouraged to contact Katrina Pyke at 905.683.8401 or kpyke@cityofpickering.com with information.

Watch for more information about the launch of this unique exhibit on Facebook or follow developments on Twitter: Search City of Pickering Great Events.

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As the gateway city to the east GTA, Pickering (population 94,000) is strategically located where Toronto, York and Durham Regions meet. Pickering is an affluent community that is steeped in history, natural beauty and small town charm with all the amenities and services that a big city has to offer. The City of Pickering is considered a municipal leader in fiscal management, service delivery, sustainability and the environment; and offers a wealth of sports, leisure and recreation opportunities to its residents. Pickering has been recognized by Profit magazine as one of the ten best



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cities in Canada for growth companies and received the 2008 FCM-CH2M Hill Sustainable Community Planning Award.

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