
COMMANDA GENERAL STORE MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

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www.commandamuseum.ca

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello everyone! well, November has left us with love, and December awaits us filled with happy anticipation of excitement and surprise.

Let me start with the most amazing news! In November, at the Loring-Restoule Business Association Annual Meeting, guess who won the “Excellence Award for 2024”? Yep - the Commanda Museum!!!! All Commanda Museum Board Members were in attendance - humbled, honoured and surprised, all at the same time.

The very next day, we held our final Board Meeting of the year. Much was discussed, debated and, finally, decided upon. We gratefully hosted a special

guest speaker at our meeting to discuss a new project - stay tuned for details to be announced in the New Year.

We are proud of our close association with many different groups - all of whom enhance the value of the Museum. Long-range planning occurs with community in mind and with the active intention of full awareness and sterling service to that community.

We will close our year, in a satisfied state and we wish each and every one of you a gentle, contented Holiday Season and a prosperous, engaging New Year.

Stay safe and strong

Darlene Erskine

President, Commanda Museum

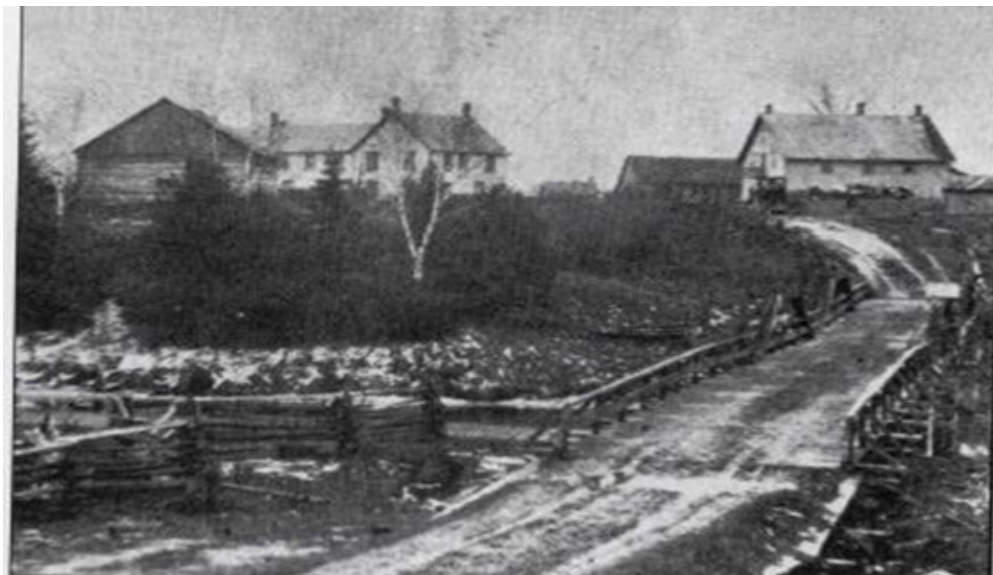


Echoes of the Past: A Glimpse into Local History

The tiny village of Nipissingan (Nipissing) was founded around 1865 by John Beatty of Eganville, about a mile up from the mouth of the South River. Not much happened for the few first years, and the only traces of European settlement in the area were a few hearty souls establishing the village of Calander, and a Hudson's Bay trading post at the mouth of Sturgeon River on the north shore of Lake Nipissing. North Bay did not yet exist.

Things began to change, however, in the 1870's. By 1874, the Nipissing Road, the last of the Provincial Colonization Roads to be built and running a distance of 67 miles from Rosseau to the Village of Nipissingan, had been completed to the point that it was now considered fit for wheeled traffic. A trickle of settlers followed, and mail was soon arriving in Nipissingan twice weekly by stagecoach. The Nipissing Road would remain the only land route into the district for years.

By 1881, the Village of Nipissing could boast two stores, two hotels, a blacksmith shop, and a municipal hall. Even though, settlement in the area remained sparse. Downriver, at the mouth of the South River, Chapman's Landing had become an important transshipping point with goods and people arriving by stage and embarking in small boats into Lake Nipissing. In 1879, settlers crossed the lake to establish the Village of Sturgeon Falls. In 1880, one Captain Wellington (Wesley) Green of Fergus, Ontario, had shipped in a small sailboat christened "Louise" to bring settlers to both Callendar and Sturgeon Falls.



Museum Updates

Anyone passing the Museum recently, may have noticed activity at the former Trinity Lutheran Church, located beside the Museum. On July 10, 2016, the Parishioners of the Trinity Lutheran Church in Commanda gathered for their final service in the beautiful 1883 Church. It's hard to imagine the emotions they felt that day, as many of their families—parents, grandparents, and even great-grandparents—had belonged to and nurtured the Church over its remarkable 133-year history.

In a gesture of extraordinary generosity, the Parishioners voted to gift the Church to the Commanda Museum. Thanks to grants received in 2023-2024 from both NOHFC and Caisse-Alliance, vital restoration work has been completed to preserve this historic structure. Repairs to the Church's foundation, door, windows, and entrance stairs have brought new life to the building, ensuring its safety and accessibility. We are thrilled to announce that the Church will be ready to open its doors again in 2025, marking a new chapter in its legacy. Stay tuned for more updates as we prepare to welcome you back into this cherished space!

Genealogy Exhibit

Earlier this year, the Museum gratefully accepted the donation of the precious and amazing Women's Institute records from both Golden Valley and Restoule. Recently, another large donation of documents, from a member of the Grawbarger family in Restoule, resulted in yet more Women's Institute records being donated to the Commanda Museum's ever-growing resource centre.

The Museum is continuing its genealogy filming (although we are in need of a volunteer to edit our films....if anyone should be interested??). If you, or someone you know would be interested in sharing their family stories and/or records, please contact us.

Tales From The Treasury

Wow, where did November go? For those that partake in the fall hunt, I hope that you had a successful year. While we've been too busy ourselves here at Forest & Farm to even contemplate getting an Outdoors Card, let alone spend some days out in a blind, the autumn season makes me think of years past, where folks would trek up from down south, much like nowadays, to vacation and hunt. Of course, many folks would and still do have their own hunt camps up here but some would catch the Grand Trunk Railway from Toronto to Trout Creek (\$8.15 return in 1900) and then a carriage out to Commanda to stay at the Evers Hotel, right across from the Museum. Imagine that, a fully functional hotel right next to the Museum....my parents would love that, to pop up from down south for a visit and stay at a "fancy" rural hotel, spitting distance from the farmstead instead of up at the ol' Best Western in North Bay!



Evers Hotel in Commanda

I sure hope to find some stories and more information on that hotel, especially since our land was severed off the Evers acreage at some point in time. One such tidbit would be what the going rate of a room would have been at the time? For comparison, I am currently down in Kingston for a farming conference where the going rate of the conference hotel is \$153/night, specially rated! I know from some historic documents, some hotels in our area were going for \$2/night in the early 1900's! And while that sounds super cheap, accounting for inflation....it would similar to roughly a \$60-80/night stay.

A great bit of writing that really captures coming up from down south to Commanda specifically in the early half of the 20th century, and available at the Museum, is Off the Beaten Path by Walter Hesman. Definitely worth a read if you can grab a copy!

Writing from "downtown" Commanda (Forest & Farm),

Jonathan Harris

Treasurer for the Board of Directors

Reflection On 2024

As we end the year, Commanda Museum gratefully acknowledges the support of many who have made possible the amazing achievements this year (as recognized by the Loring-Restoule Business Association in awarding a Certificate of Excellence to the Museum!).

Without the grant from NOHFC, supported by a grant from Caisse-Alliance, the physical work on the three buildings and the grounds of the Commanda Museum, would not have been possible. Without the guidance of Mike Nelson of Country Tanks in pulling all of the pieces together, this huge project would not have been successful.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the local businesses and contractors (Port Loring Home Hardware, Beachey Excavating, Mill Bay Market, Trillium Maple Farm, East Side Arborist, and more) who gave just that little bit more to the Museum by way of discounts and labour to help the Museum reach its goals.

For those of you who were lucky enough to have been able to attend our amazing Summerfest celebration last summer, an undertaking of that size was not possible without many volunteers, community sponsors, the generous support of Explorers' Edge, our regional Destination Development Organization, as well as support from NOHFC.

A special thank you to Sabina of 705blackfly.com who gave guidance to the Board on how to move forward in this modern social media world and who has supported the Museum in so many ways over the past 2 years including preparing films, the monthly newsletter and maintaining our website!

All of our work and events in 2024 were supported by an amazing team effort by the Board, our summer employees, and community and family volunteers....thank you to each and everyone who helped out!

In closing, introductions to the 2024 Board of Directors are in order. Each Board Member brings different strengths and viewpoints to the table, but the two overriding philosophies shared by all are:

- A steadfast commitment to preserving the rich history and heritage of Commanda and the surrounding area for future generations.
- A dedication to fostering community engagement and education through our events, exhibits, and collaborative projects.

With these principles as our guide, we look forward to embarking on another exciting year of growth, learning, and connection in 2025. Thank you for your ongoing support and belief in our mission.

Darlene Erskine – President

Jennifer Bowman – Museum Manager

Deb Leeming – Secretary

Gord McLaren – Chairman

Jonathan Harris – Bookkeeper

And these fantastic full-time volunteers:

Mike Nelson – Jack-of-All-Trades

Herb Leeming – Museum Driver/Sherpa/Handyman

John Erskine – First Gentleman

Fundraising

As 2024 ends, the Board of Directors would ask that you consider donating to the Commanda Museum. Charitable Tax Receipts are available and etransfers can be sent to museumincommanda@gmail.com.

While the Museum has been fortunate to receive capital grants that have allowed the physical space to be maintained, almost ALL operating funds are generated by donations and food sales (each and every one of our “almost world-famous milkshakes” contributes to that fund!).

Thank you!

Finally, we want to thank YOU, the incredible supporters of the Museum who share our passion for Commanda's heritage and Canadian history. We are deeply grateful for every person who visited the Museum, purchased products at our gift shop, purchased snacks, made donations and cared about what we are doing. Without you, we wouldn't be able to pursue all the fabulous projects we have coming in 2025. See you next season!

