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By William A. Warnick
180 Rosslyn Ave. South
HAMILTON, ON L8M 3J5
Phone 905 549-6086 E-mail wwarnick@cogeco.ca
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The Port Maitland, Festival of History is a Great Success!

"A ship in harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are built for." So says John A. Shedd. Last year, when I began asking groups involved in local history if they would join me at the Port Maitland Airport for a much larger history display than my first two, I was worried about a number of things. It was something I wanted to do, but it was not safe. What if. . . ? or What about. . . ? And maybe . . . ! This past Saturday, it happened! The third Port Maitland history display went off as a great success. This year it was renamed the *Port Maitland Festival of History*. All my *what ifs* and *what abouts*, and may *maybes*, worked out! I am delighted that I decided to take my ship into the stormy sea!

To say it was a one-man organization is only partly correct. Yes for many months, I toiled alone, finding displays, and explaining to their organizers that I was a one-man show, *but don't worry! This is my third attempt. This display will grow into something much bigger!* First we need to get a good show started. "Will you take the chance with me" was my usual plea. A plea given mostly to people I had never met, - not until this past Saturday that is. I wanted to attract a number of organizations who have accomplished some great works in preserving history and I needed some credibility on which to hang my hook. As a volunteer at the Canadian Football Hall of Fame and Museum in Hamilton, I know the Managing Director, Janice Smith. After explaining to Janice, what I needed, I asked her if she would commit the Hall of Fame and bring along the Grey Cup. She agreed. This was the hook I needed. Not so much to impress the other groups, but rather to give some credibility to myself. Then off to the Canadian Warplane Heritage and Robin Hill! After these two groups were on board, the work became easier. Not because others would not have joined without them, but rather it gave me the sense of success needed for me to be comfortable selling the Festival to them.

Once more groups agreed to join us, it was more clear than ever that I needed some movers and shakers to help organize the actual event. This is where Ann Marie Flatt and Estelle Pringle came to the rescue. Estelle, has been the energy lady at the Dunnville District Heritage Association, always promoting and endorsing that which we think is good! We think the Festival of History is Good and Estelle promoted it! Estelle, likely distributed personally more promotional flyers than any other person or group. Ann Marie, quickly became the person to organize the volunteers that she and Estelle had found. Ann Marie, is a detail person who never let me miss a beat. There is an expression that goes something like this. *If you need to get something done, give the job to a busy person.* Nothing has proven more correct than that, as it applies to Estelle and Ann Marie. But, they were not the only volunteers. In total, we had over 20, people who worked either on Friday setting up, or during the festival on Saturday. This does not include the many members of No. 6 RCAF who provided the needed support at the airport and who cooked for, and served our guests. Of course we also had 35 history groups, plus former football players and Pig-Skin-Pete with over 120 people volunteering with these combined groups. That is more people than I had visit my first display in 2001!

The day went very well, with an estimated attendance of between 700 to 800. The weather cooperated, and even

if it had not, we had good protection under the roof of the hanger. Our visitors were generous, making it possible to give a donation of 1,050.00 to No. 6 RCAF Dunnville Museum.

It had been suggested to me when I mentioned to some, that I need corporate sponsors to cover some of my cost that this would be a difficult task. Somewhere along the way I heard something about a chicken and her teeth and a dentist, *pulling teeth from a hen or something!* I visited ten local businesses and without any problems found nine sponsors. I failed to follow-up on number ten. The sponsors provided funds allowing me to print and distribute 9,000 flyers. In addition to this, both the Dunnville Chronicle and the Welland Tribune, ran a full-page article with photos, and a story written by *moi!* In addition to the Chronicle this years sponsors were, Rasch & Chambers Ltd., Riverside Marina, Squires Pizza, Flatt's Bait and Tackle, Topside Marine, Readers, Hedley & McLachlin, and the Ballard - Minor Funeral Home. Thanks to all!

I have given you lots of numbers, but more important than the numbers, is the energy shown by the volunteers and participants. Of course, none of this would have mattered if no one came to the show, and they did come!

Will there be a 2004 Port Maitland, Festival of History? I strongly suspect so! However, I do not believe it will happen without some form of a formal committee of people who get things done. This weekend we solicited volunteers to help at the 2004 festival and did receive offers. However, what we need are more people willing to work, (maybe even to work hard), for the next twelve months, doing the thinking, and planning and detail work needed to put an even larger festival together for 2004. It looks like we have a good start.

Please let me know what you thought of the Festival, and if you are interested in getting involved in a 2004 Festival. William (Bill) A. Warnick 180 Rosslyn Ave. South HAMILTON, ON L8M 3J5 e-mail wwarnick@cogeco.ca Phone 905 549-6086.

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