



James Fortin, curator/conservateur of the Greater Sudbury Heritage Museum examines a 1948 wind-up toy car recently acquired by the museum. JOHN LAPPA/THE SUDBURY STAR

Exploring Sudbury's past

Public outcry kept Sudbury's many museums operating

BY LARA BRADLEY
The Sudbury Star

As curator James Fortin finishes his interview with veteran NHL referee Dave Newell, he prepares to meet with a prospective sponsor.

He's hoping Bell will pay part of the bill to bring a massive Hockey Hall of Fame exhibit to Sudbury, June 2-5. Newell will be one of many speakers at the event.

It's been a busy week for the curator of the City of Greater Sudbury's museum sites.

In between preparing for the exhibit that will take up 2,000 square feet of the McClelland Arena's ice surface, featuring 40 NHL players with a connection to Sudbury, and curating a secondary exhibit at the Copper Cliff Curling Club on sports in general in the area (to be held the same weekend), he also has the annual Heritage Fair on his mind.

At the time of this interview, he was preparing for the workshop he hosted Friday at the Sudbury Regional Historical Heritage Fair about Thomas Edison's visit to Sudbury in 1901.

"I know where he bought his moccasins," he said. "He wrote a four-page letter to his wife on his visit here."

It's all part of Fortin's philosophy on museums. Museums should not be warehouses for the past but rather play an active role in the community.

"We're active. We're alive. If we cannot be relevant and useful than we're not doing our job," he said.

His office is full of artifacts residents have donated throughout the winter, such as the 1914 Monell Trophy, part of senior baseball's history in Sudbury.

Unfortunately, Fortin has not been able to begin cataloging these treasures because he's been busy creating exhibits and programs to explain the past.

What should people expect to see while visiting Sudbury's museums, such as the Anderson Farm in Lively, one of its biggest?

"They should not expect the Royal Ontario Museum," Fortin said.

"These are community museums. We are community-based and community-supported. The community has a strong emotional attachment to them."

Sudbury's museums are the guardians of its history. The Anderson Farm not only showcases farm life in the Lively area at the turn of the century, but it also

Museums of the North

This is the second in an ongoing series exploring the museums of Northern Ontario. Next week: Sault Ste. Marie

houses the history of the town of Creighton, a town that no longer exists as even its buildings have been razed.

Rayside-Balfour's museum chronicles the French-Canadian settlement of the outlying areas, focusing on agricultural history, while the Flour Mill museum looks at the French-Canadian urban settlers and the role the silos played in the community.

Science North and Dynamic Earth are repositories of the mining, scientific, and geological history of the area.

And there are many more.

Two years ago, when city council was looking for ways to trim the budget, it put its four museum sites — Anderson, Copper Cliff, Rayside-Balfour, and Flour Mill — on the list. Councillors were asked to consider shutting all of them down.

"The community stood up and said no," Fortin said. The councillors said no. There was a massive letter-writing campaign."

This was, of course, very encouraging to Fortin, as both a curator with a passion for history and the only full-time staff member of the four museums.

Since then, it's been full steam ahead for the museum, with a steady flow of visitors.

"We're on the verge of developing into a high-class museum. Not in terms of a physical building but in terms of exhibits and outreach," he said.

Outreach is a word that crops up frequently when talking to Fortin. Not only do the museum sites host workshops on everything from making soap to birch bark masks during the summer, they put on exhibits all

winter in the city's libraries.

Sudbury's Museum in a Suitcase program also visits students in local schools. And this summer the Greater Sudbury Heritage Museum will also put a booth in the farmer's market at the Market Square.

Last year the museum served 250 plates of blueberry pancakes at the Flour Mill site during the Blueberry Festival.

A concert series was also held at the Flour Mill Museum in the past, while a theatre troupe occasionally takes over the Anderson Farm.

"We're building community with the museums," Fortin said. "Eventually, everything that is creative runs through the museums."

It is impossible to appreciate what we have today — whether it be sports, mining, or the regreening of Sudbury — without visiting the past, said Fortin.

That's why he is so excited about the hockey and sports exhibits coming in June.

"It's our opportunity to unite all the communities to one city, by showing our common history," he said.

"Sports is a good tool. Even if we are not active in sports, we're aware of who plays sports ... We have a lot of material in the archives. This is our chance to showcase it."

See MUSEUMS / E3

MUSEUMS: more than just artifacts on display

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While the city of Greater Sudbury operates four local museums, several others are open throughout the summer months.

■ **Anderson Farm Museum, Highway 24, Lively**

Now a community museum, this dairy farm was established in the early 1900s by the Anderson family, which immigrated from Finland. The site has original and reconstructed buildings containing artifacts relating primarily to the Town of Walden, dating between 1900 and 1950. Finnish language documents and an archives for the small towns of the region are also accessible. Live theatre and community events, tours, heritage craft workshops and educational programs for Sudbury area schools are offered. Activities change in relation to current exhibits.

To book a tour, call Jim Fortin at 692-4448.

■ **Copper Cliff Museum, 26 Balsam St., Copper Cliff**

The Copper Cliff Museum is housed in a turn-of-the-century log cabin that rests on the site of the first house in the former Town of Copper Cliff. To book a tour, call Fortin at 692-4448.

■ **Flour Mill Museum, 245 St. Charles St., Sudbury**

The house, made of clap boards, was built in 1903 by its owner, Francois Varieur. Varieur was the foreman for Evans Lumber, a logging mill which was situated on Xavier Street. This community museum's artifacts help depict

the lifestyle of early Sudbury's French-Canadian Flour Mill inhabitants. The displays include antique furniture, tools, household items and memorabilia. A photo collection related to Sudbury is also available.

To book a tour call Jim Fortin at 692-4448.

■ **Rayside-Balfour Museum, 239 Montee Principale, Lionel E. Lalonde Centre, Azilda**

Located in the Lionel E. Lalonde Centre in Azilda, the Rayside-Balfour Museum contains artifacts depicting the prosperous agricultural life in the "valley".

To book a tour call Jim Fortin at 692-4448.

■ **Northern Ontario Railway Museum and Heritage Centre, 26 Bloor St., Capreol**

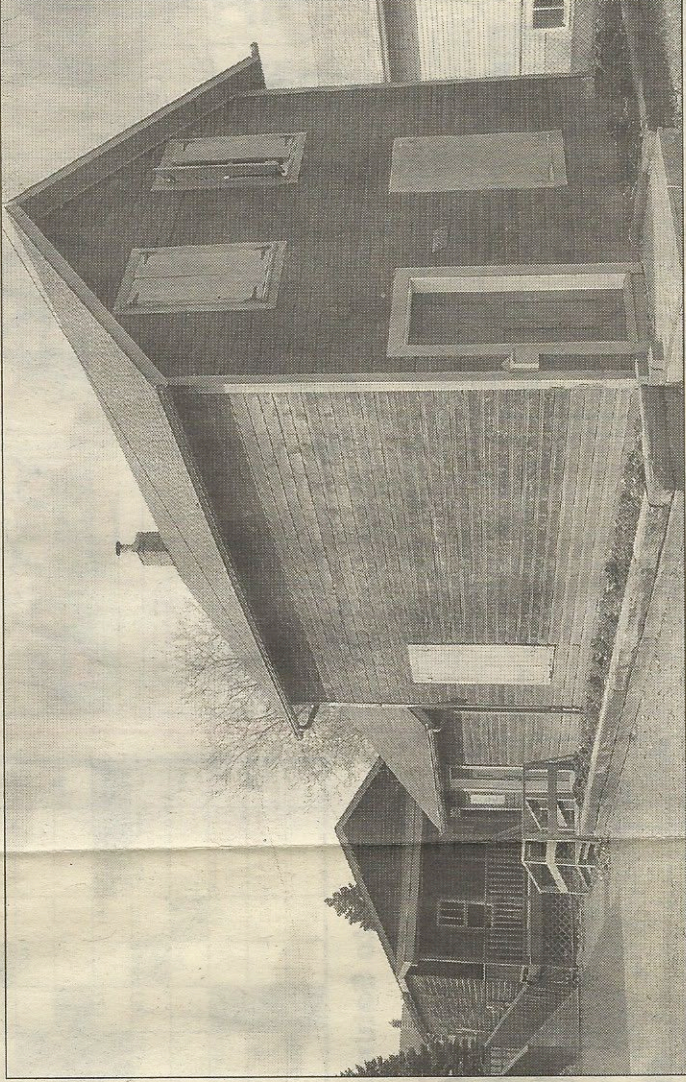
Explore railroad memorabilia and equipment; mining, lumbering and railroad photograph collections and historical items that pay tribute to Northern Ontario's heritage.

For more information, e-mail your questions and requests to normhc@vianet.ca.

■ **Art Gallery of Sudbury, 251 John St., Sudbury**

The collection at this public art gallery focuses on Canadian historical and contemporary art, Inuit and native art and artifacts and northeastern Ontario artists. Lectures, films, concerts and workshops are offered and juried and individual artist exhibitions are displayed. Temporary and travelling exhibitions are also presented.

■ **Centre franco-ontarien de folklore, 1169 Dollard St., Sudbury**



JOHN LAPPA/THE SUDBURY STAR
The Flour Mill Museum offers visitors a look at the early development of Sudbury's urban francophone population. It's housed in heritage buildings near the city's downtown.

Located in a historic building, this centre is involved with the research and interpretation of Franco-Ontarian culture, through collecting and archiving its material, spiritual, symbolic and historic heritage.

Staff at the centre are expert in Franco-Ontarian heritage and its oral traditions. The site provides workshops and conferences, a reference library, guided tours of exhibits relating to French Canadian culture, a Franco-Ontarian heritage data bank and a folklore archives. (705)

675-8986.

■ **Science North, 100 Ramsey Lake Rd., Sudbury**

Northern Ontario's science centre features interactive exhibits, including live animals, a model hydroelectric station, a stream table, a solar playground and a fossil area.

Other subjects include biology, geology, meteorology and communications. The

site also has a 200-seat Imax theatre.

Daily workshops and presentations are held throughout the year. (705) 522-3701, www.sciencenorth.ca.

■ **Killarney Centennial Museum, 29 Commissioner St., Killarney**

The first white settler arrived in Sheba-

haning, now Killarney, in June 1820, and established a fur trade post here. The Killarney Centennial Museum opened in 1967, and traces our history from the time of the fur trade to the present.

The old jail house, built in 1886, was the first site of the Killarney Museum. It still stands beside the current log museum on Commissioner Street.

See a slide show, household items, photographs, and artifacts from the town's commercial fishing, logging, mining, and tourism industries. (705) 287-2424 or (888) 597-2721 (toll-free).

■ **The Sudbury Region Police Museum, Greater Sudbury Police Service Headquarters, 190 Brady St., Sudbury**

Through the use of artifacts, photographs and documents, the museum displays the origins, growth and development of law enforcement in the Sudbury region.

The displays include: the History of the Sudbury Police Service; Wall of Memories; weapons; forensics; transportation; and body armour.

For general information or comments, e-mail museum@police.sudbury.on.ca, or call (705) 675-9171, ext. 2635.

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