

The Glengarry News

Advance: Manor House Social

July 18 2018 BY TARA MACDONALD News Staff

The Manor House Social opens tonight at 6:30 pm at the Sir John Johnson Manor House in Williamstown. Guests will enjoy live entertainment, a barbeque, ice-cream for the kids, as well as a book and home-made pie sale. A great chance to meet old friends and new, the Manor House Social has been a community staple for almost two decades.

The Glengarry Pipe Band will kick-off the event with heart-warming sounds of pipes and drums which is sure to bring out the Celtic heritage in all of us. Next up are Ashley MacLeod's Mini-Music Makers. These adorable child-performers will delight with their music, rhythm and step-dancing. Of course, no true Glengarry ceilidh would be complete without a toe-tapping, crowd-clapping performance by the world-famous MacCulloch Dancers. Williamstown favourite David MacPhee and his students' will also be there to entertain the crowds with lively fiddle music. Last but not least, local piano teacher and vocal coach Gillian Legroulx will wrap-up the event with a few songs from her students.

Helping to preserve our history

This annual fundraising event helps bring in money needed to maintain and restore the Sir John Johnson Manor House, one of the oldest surviving buildings in Ontario. Built between 1784 and 1792 as part of a mill site, the house was expanded in the 1820s and has gone through several changes over the years. Today the Manor House provides visitors with a remarkable example of vernacular building methods popular during the 18th and 19th centuries.

In addition to its architectural design, the Sir John Johnson Manor House is also historically significant due to its historical connection to Sir John Johnson, who encouraged United Empire Loyalists to settle in the St. Lawrence River Valley after the American Revolution. Declared a place of national historic significance in 1961 by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the property was acquired by Parks Canada in 1971 and became part of the nation-wide system of national parks and national historic sites.

The site is managed and operated by the Sir John Johnson House Manor Committee, a group of dedicated local volunteers who have worked tirelessly to increase awareness and take steps to ensure the Manor House continues to be a central feature and source of pride for the community.

Big changes ahead: Manor House to become

On July 5th, Brent Lafave delivered a Tea Talk at the Glengarry Nor'Westers and Loyalist Museum in Williamstown. During the talk, guests learned the story of Sir John Johnson and the history of the Manor House and what the Sir John Johnson House Manor Committee is planning for the future.

While exterior renovations to the tune of almost \$1 million were completed earlier this year, interior renovations have hit a few road blocks. The Committee is currently in the process of restoring the two rooms on the main floor and continuing to raise funds for the restoration work needed on the second floor.

According to Mr. Lafave, the Committee hopes to have the downstairs rooms available to rent for functions while the upstairs portion of the house is to be transformed into a 4 bedroom inn with a live-in concierge.

“The idea,” said Mr. Lafave, “is to take this historic house and make it the anchor for South Glengarry.” The Committee’s plans fill a gap in South Glengarry’s accommodations offerings and help to keep visitors in the area longer. By providing such services, the Manor House also has the potential to become financially self-sustaining.

The Manor House inn will offer guests the opportunity to experience what it’s like to live in this unique historical home. The inn will also feature period furniture in keeping with the history of the home. It’s expected that the inn will also appeal to those interested in paranormal activities who are hoping to catch a glimpse of the Lady in the Blue Dress or the mysterious Rider.

“The government has already invested \$665,000,” said Mr. Lafave. “Now we need to look towards ourselves and invest in our own history and in our own future.”

“If we don’t look after our own history, if we don’t look after our own buildings, by golly nobody will,” continued Mr. Lafave. “Local people need to stand up and force the larger community to keep the Manor House. With this plan, we have an unlimited future. Now we just need to raise the money.”

Renovations will require \$700,000.00 worth of work to complete the project according to the engineering estimate performed by WST Engineering, however Mr. Lafave believes that with the help of volunteers it can be done for significantly less. \$60,000.00 has already been pledged towards the renovations.

Want to learn more?

The Sir John Johnson House National Historic Site is open throughout the week from the mid-May until the end of August. During the winter months, committee volunteers welcome visitors every Monday or by appointment on other days of the week. Throughout the year, visitors are welcome to tour the grounds or enjoy a picnic under the trees.

For more information about the Summer Social, to book a tour, or learn more about efforts to preserve the Manor House, call 613-347-2356.