

The Glengarry News

Glengarry Pioneer Museum: Smithin

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“They keep history alive,” said Glengarry Pioneer Museum volunteer Lise Cl  roux during the third annual Smithin: Blacksmith Festival.

Ms. Cl  roux was joined by Jean-Marc Lessard from Saint Donat de Montcalm, Quebec. “I love watching the smithing guys. When I was younger, I wanted to do metal work. So when I found out about the event, I had to come.” Mr. Lessard was not disappointed.

The event was held from 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday and Sunday at the Glengarry Pioneer Museum in Dunvegan. However, demonstrations continued on late into the night with workshop participants taking advantage of the location. “I live in the city,” said Gr  g Singer a farrier from Sherbrooke, Quebec. “It’s hard to work long hours because of the noise, so it was wonderful to be able to work on my passion late into the night.”

While the festival featured a number of artisans and crafts vendors along with a horseshoe toss, children’s activities, and a refreshment stand, the main purpose for the event was to provide an opportunity for blacksmiths to come together to share their knowledge and experiences.

“There’s no school in Canada that teaches traditional style blacksmithing,” said Monkland blacksmith and event co-organizer Patrick Taylor. “We need to exchange ideas, information, techniques and skills, that’s why events like this are so important. We take our craft seriously. In order to be good at it and to get people interested, we have to pass on the information.” Singer agreed, “I came here for the exchange. I’m a farrier but I try to live by demonstration; to show people my technique and to learn from others. These types of events help the advancement of all blacksmiths and ferries. We need to help and to teach each other.”

Workshop instructors Mike Armstrong and Megan Carter traveled in from Georgetown, Ontario to host an antique-style hacksaw making class. “It’s important for people to come to learn about the trade, about how much work it might be, the techniques used,” said Armstrong. “This weekend we had seven folks in the class, and we were making six hacksaws. It’s been a great weekend, we got a lot done and there are some really nice saws coming out of the works.”

Mr. Armstrong and Ms. Carter met at the Haliburton School of the Arts. After completing their studies, the pair combined their skills in 2012 to become Armstrong and Carter Ironworks. While based in Georgetown, Ontario Mr. Armstrong says he’s hoping to leave the Toronto area for greener pastures in Glengarry. “The people are great here and the small events are really nice,” said Mr. Armstrong. “Last night we went out to Maxville for the pig roast which was a lot of fun.”

While the two-day event drew close to 200 guests, but what was truly impressive was to see how far people traveled to be here. The workshops drew participants from Quebec’s Eastern Townships all the way to King City and Hamilton, Ontario. Also in attendance were a number of our neighbours from the south with demonstrators and participants hailing from as far away as Vermont, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, USA.

“This group, they come from all over the place,” said Mike Kennedy a mechanical engineer from Vermont. “This is a connection to the past,” said Mr. Kennedy. “It’s important to remember that connection. There’s a lot of effort, knowledge and hours to get something from a piece of ore to the finished product.” Mr. Kennedy was joined by fellow blacksmiths Stephen Midkiff from Pennsylvania and Rich Bostiga from Connecticut. When asked what made this event so special that they would drive so far to attend, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Bostiga lauded the Ontario Artists Blacksmith Association (OABA) and members – such as Mr. Taylor, Mr. Armstrong and Ms. Carter – who work hard to share their knowledge and bring the community together.

Justine Southam, a stone carver from Quebec’s Eastern Townships, couldn’t agree more. “The OABA has done a great job of advancing the trade and connecting people,” said Ms. Southam. “This year’s event brought in a great group of people from all over to share their knowledge and tools. There are not many events where we can get together, especially in Eastern Ontario. It’s also great for the folks from Quebec to meet the Ontario blacksmiths.”