

Alton bicentennial celebrations upcoming

By **ZACHARY ROMAN**

The Village of Alton will be celebrating its bicentennial this September.

The 200th anniversary celebration will be taking place on Saturday, Sept. 17 and will begin in the morning. From 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the TPC Toronto at Osprey Valley golf facilities, residents can stop by for a free coffee and muffin. Osprey Valley will be hosting an open house at that time, to showcase what they have planned for the future. Alton's Osprey Valley is soon to become the home of Canadian golf as Golf Canada and related organizations are moving their headquarters there. Events in the Village of Alton will kick off around 10:30 when Steve Turner, also known as The Wedding Piper, will play the bagpipes before a grand opening with Caledon's Town Crier, Andrew Welch. A well-known musician from Alton, Ryan Masters, will be leading those in attendance in the singing of Canada's national anthem. After speeches from attending dignitaries, businesses in the Village of Alton will be open for all to enjoy.

The Alton Grange Association is planning a guided hike, "One Step at a Time," as well as a "Critters in the Creek" event. The Paul Moran Gallery in Alton will be showcasing Alton's history, and the Alton Mill Arts Centre will be open as well.

Lunch will be available at Rays 3rd Generation Bistro Bakery, Gather Cafe, and the Alton Legion. Those looking for a cold beverage can make the short journey to GoodLot Farmstead Brewing Co. for a pint.

There's going to be three "help desks" set up in Alton for the bicentennial: at the Old School/New School, the 4 Corners, and at the Alton Village Square. The help desks will help guide people through the day's celebrations, and souvenir postcards will be handed out.

Heritage Caledon has three different heritage walking tours people can enjoy, and maps of these walks can be found online at visitcaledon.ca/pages/walking-tours. While the Village of Alton is celebrating its 200th anniversary, the Alton Legion will be hosting events to celebrate its 75th as well.

Eric Wood, who is the event director for the bicentennial, explained Alton has a varied history and is much more than just four corners. Alton is located on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the Traditional Territory of the Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat. Plans for settling Alton began in 1816, when Martin Middaugh Jr., a United Empire Loyalist, received 200 acres of land there from the crown. A settlement grew on the banks of Shaw's Creek and Alton became an industrial centre. However, the Village was not yet named Alton.

In 1852, it was decided the settlement needed a post office and an official name. A town hall meeting was held to come up with one, and a resident, John Meek, suggested Alton as he held in hand a newspaper from Alton, Illinois. Wood explained everyone agreed that the name would be easy to spell and be a great choice for the community.

The Alton post office opened two years later in 1854, and soon after that, Meek opened the first hotel in Alton. The Village was very prosperous due to the mills that powered industry, and Alton was largely built up from the 1850s to early 1900s. Wood said Alton has a remarkable number of its historic homes and landmarks still intact, and that it provides people the opportunity to step back in time and see what it was like to live in a small Ontario hamlet in the 1800s.

Wood said he and other Alton residents value the Village's unique history and numerous historical buildings. The landscape of Alton is beautiful, too: Shaw's Creek runs through the Village and to Alton's north is a hill known to locals as "The Pinnacle." Wood said numerous generations of Alton residents have enjoyed hiking, biking, skiing and tobogganing on the hill.

"We are fortunate to be able to walk through the past, enjoy the present and look forward

to the future," wrote Wood in a message to the Citizen. "In the past, Alton villagers have banded together to witness and fight a number of fires, two major floods, and the closing and opening of numerous businesses. Our residents, both past and present, protect and value this wonderful community. We are fortunate to have numerous historical buildings, unique historical pictures, (and) recorded documents and stories, some of which will be on display during our celebration."

For more information on Alton and its upcoming celebration, those interested can visit The Alton Village Association and Alton Grange Association websites. There's also the Alton Bicentennial Facebook Page, and Wood said the community has been using the hashtag #Alton200 to track and tie postings about the bicentennial together.