

King native receives heritage award



By Mark Pavilons

A King Township native son has been given a prestigious honour.

Paul Willoughby, a former resident of King City and a graduate of King City Secondary School, received the 2013 Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement. It was presented at a ceremony at Queen's Park in February.

A member of the King Township Historical Society for more than 30 years, Willoughby has served on the boards of The York Pioneer and Historical Society; Brampton Heritage Board; Brampton Historical Society. He was vice-president of the Historic Sharon Burying Ground Association and a director of Community Heritage Ontario.

His love of history, culture and heritage is something that comes naturally to him.

“Growing up in King City I learned much about my family and my surroundings from my great uncle Donald (Dan) Rawlings and my friend Andrew McClure. Andy's daughter, Elizabeth Gilham, wrote the book on the history of King Township. My mother, Doris Willoughby (nee Hollinshead) continues to be a source of knowledge about King Township and an inspiration to keep learning. As a result I've tried to learn more about anywhere I've lived, be it the University of Guelph, Cabbagetown or Brampton.”

Willoughby has much to be proud of.

As far back as Grade 10, he won the Fred Swayze Award for Local History at KCSS. “I was the student representative on the planning committee for the celebration of the 100th anniversary in 1974 of the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph. And I was pleased to serve two terms as President of The York Pioneer and Historical Society, one of the oldest historical societies in Canada.”

Willoughby is a firm believer in the idea “you can't know where you're going unless you know where you've come from.”

As far as preserving heritage is concerned, Willoughby noted municipalities that have formed heritage committees are headed in the right direction, provided the local council is supportive. The Ontario Heritage Act has been improved since it was first written but still needs some work to safeguard valuable heritage assets. The provincial government's designation of certain communities as growth areas has resulted in the loss of heritage buildings to urban sprawl, despite the efforts of the heritage community, he observed.

“I would like to see more support from the federal government for national historic sites such as Sharon Temple,” he concluded.