

# Valuable and rewarding work for seniors promoting Sarnia's rich history

*Phil Egan - September 2019*

As the tip of the Baby Boom generation slipped past 2011, the men and women born in the wake of the Second World War began to retire in droves from their working lives.

For some of us, retirement years spent fishing, playing with grandchildren and golfing isn't quite enough to leave us feeling appreciated and fulfilled. If that sounds like I'm describing you, here's some good news.

There's a welcoming home waiting for active seniors at the Sarnia Historical Society. Sarnia has a richer history than many people realize, and the Sarnia Historical Society is both celebrating that history for our current citizens and recording it for future generations. If that sounds like valuable work to do, perhaps you'd like to be a part of it.

There's no question that this city has awakened to an intense interest in its past. The attendance of as many as 200 people per event at a series of recent historical walking tours of Sarnia has demonstrated that desire to enrich our knowledge of our yesterdays better than any survey could possibly have done.

The renaissance of interest in Sarnia's past began in 2014, when Sarnia military historian Tom Slater produced the War Remembrance Project, his brilliant record of Sarnia fallen soldiers. Since 2015, Society members has also produced website ([thesarniahistoricalsociety.com](http://thesarniahistoricalsociety.com)) containing hundreds of stories about Sarnia's past, a history of the fire department (Walking Through Fire), produced a public memorial to Constable Jack Lewis, Sarnia's first police line-of-duty death, sold over 4,000 pins commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, organized two sold-out military dinners commemorating Vimy Ridge and the end of the Great War, raised over \$50,000 in fundraising to support the Society's various projects, rescued some valuable historical artifacts from the trash heap, organized public meeting with intriguing historical speakers and published over 200 stories on Sarnia history in the pages of the weekly Sarnia Journal.

We've also been involved with improvements to the Cenotaph and other historical markers at Veteran's Park, have spoken to dozens of school classes, civic groups, service clubs and other are developing a civic history school curriculum for Sarnia school children, are about to publish a 160-year history of policing in Sarnia this fall (Keeping the Peace), and are developing, together with the Lambton County archivist and the curator of the Lambton County Heritage Museum, a series of thirteen historical TV shows (Backward Glances) for our local cable network. We are also planning to edit and publish a new coffee-table pictorial history of Canatara Park.

We've even received a nomination for the Governor General's award for Excellence in Community Programming.

If all of that sounds like worthwhile and rewarding work to you, then volunteering your time for a few hours per week might be just the catalyst you need to add some interesting flavour to your life. The Sarnia Historical Society needs researchers (we'll show you the ropes), speakers, fundraisers, writers and people with ideas.

It has been said that every time someone dies, a library burns to the ground.

Everyone has a story to tell. Some of those stories offer treasured lessons for a younger generation. We want to record those stories before they're lost forever. Want to help? Contact Society president Ron Realesmith at [ron@sarniahistoricalsociety.com](mailto:ron@sarniahistoricalsociety.com).