

Ontario Heritage Conference

May 30-June 1 2019

Bluewater and Goderich Ontario

Conference Report

Maggie Whalley, LACH 2015-2019

Main theme: Understanding the Economic Impacts of Heritage

Thursday eve: Opening Reception and Welcome: Hensall Heritage Hall

Friday 9 am: 'Heritage Economics' Kelly Hill

Kelly Hill is President of Hill Strategies Research which has explored the economic impacts of cultural heritage tourism. He has identified potential key performance indicators and explored the 'direct' and 'indirect' economic benefits. We were surprised to learn of the size the sector, in 2017 \$26.7 billion in 'culture industries'. Kelly also has attempted to quantify 'intangible benefits', such as aesthetic (civic pride), educational, and individual well being in studies which have concluded that users of cultural heritage resources seem to receive health benefits.

10:45 am: 'Heritage Districts' Panel discussion

The first speaker was Kayla Galvin whose thesis was 'Goderich: A Case Study of Conserving Cultural Heritage Resources in a Disaster'. She has monitored change especially in the downtown area and noted that rebuilding has increased business activity and the size itself of the HCD.

Cherri Hurst spoke of the development and institution of the Weston (Toronto) Heritage District, which started as a real grass-roots initiative and has continued to grow and expand. She believes that this conservation initiative has helped to improve the economic life of the district ('gentrification') as well as providing identity and purpose.

Wes Kinghorn, living in Woodfield in London (London's first HCD) continued with this theme, noting that HCDs have a way of improving not only the physical environs but also community spirit and 'neighbourliness', encouraging diversity within comfortable eclectic districts.

1:45 pm: 'Goderich Harbour Guided Walkabout'

This was a fascinating tour of heritage houses, industrial plants and dockside, starting with stories of several early houses from the great grandson of one of Goderich's first settlers. We moved on to the restored lighthouse up on the cliff, discovered former uses of the lake-side land (cricket pitch?), heard of early fishing activities, saw the new restaurant in the former lake-side railway station, heard of the history of the movements of grain and its storage and, the most amazing of all, of the huge under lake

salt mines still in very effective operation on the harbourfront. The whole south side of the harbor has been turned into a recreational area.

6:30 pm: Gala Dinner featuring 'Heritage Moments' (televised) with guest speaker Anthony Wilson-Smith, President and CEO *Historica Canada*, after a long career in journalism. He has provided guidance and helped direct research and production of many 'Heritage Moments, which have ranged over topics from the invention of the ice hockey goalie mask (his own favourite) to foreign ethnic experiences (particularly the West Coast Japanese during and after internment.)

Saturday 9:00 am: 'Lime Burning in Ontario – Characteristics and Cultural Value' Christopher Andreae

Lime-burning artifacts and remnants are largely ignored and unmarked in Ontario's agricultural/industrial historical landscape. Chris took us on some fascinating explorations of some of these and educated us about the historical importance of this once small scale activity. There are numerous planning and conservation issues but it is concluded that these artifacts have cultural and natural value.

10:45 am: 'Grist, Rails and Crystals' John Rutledge

John explored the siting and conservation of many old mills in the local Goderich/Brussels area. He has been working as a conservation/restoration architect in this area for many years and recognizes the constantly recurring issues of 'history v reuse' and applicable or fatally inapplicable additions to historically and architecturally significant buildings. There is an ongoing dialogue between 'heritage and history'.

1:30 pm 'Bluewater Bus Tour: St Joseph Settlement, Narcisse Cantin, Zurich and Bayfield' (last destination cancelled due to weather)

The tour provided great insights into the founding and growth – and subsequent shrinkage - of St Joseph's (founded by French fishermen from Quebec) mainly gleaned from the small museum in Hessenland Country Inn and the Pioneer Park. Cantin had wanted the 'port' to grow into major significance with the building of a Lake Huron – Lake Erie Canal. Zurich featured the Hess Clock Tower which is a Canadiana Tower Clock – one of only 3 in Ontario.