

HAMILTON BRANCH TAKES ON A NEW PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITY

New, creative opportunities avail themselves in varied formats as we reach out to our communities to tell our Loyalist stories. Who would think that tree decorating would be one of these new ways?

Ruth Nicholson UE, our Hamilton Branch President, received notice from the curator of Fieldcote Museum in Ancaster that the museum's project for this season was to invite heritage and community groups to decorate trees for their "Forest of Christmas Trees" display. After a brief discussion through email, Ruth and I decided to take on this challenge and to showcase a specially decorated tree to reflect the colours and the time period of the Loyalists. This involved decorating a real balsam fir tree inside the museum.

We decided to decorate our tree as authentically as possible round the time of the 1780s and to use predominantly red, blue and white. Any decorations would definitely have been handmade out of wood, wool, straw or bits of fabric. We know the early Loyalists/pioneers likely did not have a tree due to the risk of fire and a lack of space for just living inside their small cabins. However on the stairwell walls of the museum we did read that Rev. Stuart visited a Loyalist family in their cabin, in the Kingston area in December 1796 and that they had decorated their cabin with balsam boughs that smelled so very fragrant.

Our tree was beautifully topped with a cornhusk angel, surrounding by Loyalist flags. The angel was enhanced by a spot light. Lace angels, wool covered balls, popcorn and cranberry garlands as well as red, blue and white wool garlands graced our tree. Gingerbread people and a variety of other stuffed and wooden handmade decorations hung from the branches and a few clear mini lights glistened throughout.

Thanks to Ruth for donating her mother's work from the past. All these elements blended well to tell our message of the early pioneers, the Loyalists. Several hand-coloured flags told the story, in writing, on the reverse side, of who the Loyalists are along with a description of the parts of the flag.

This tree display is part of "A Magical Fieldcote Christmas". A total of nineteen trees have been decorated by various community groups. The Hamilton Branch tree is on the 2nd floor of the museum with the "forest" and it catches your eye immediately upon entering the door. Our new Branch sign shows beautifully under our tree, prominently identifying The Hamilton Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. This display can be seen until December 24 at 64 Sulphur Springs Road, Ancaster, Wednesday to Saturday from 1-5 p.m. The public are invited to vote on their favourite tree so that adds to the fun of viewing.



Pat Blackburn UE, Education Chair, Hamilton Branch.

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