
Keith Thompson: Heritage and Volunteerism

Keith Thompson of Clayton, in the Town of Mississippi Mills, is receiving a 2005 Lanark County Award of Excellence in the categories of Heritage and Volunteerism. He was nominated by Leah Truscott for his outstanding work with the Lanark County section of the Ontario Genealogical website.

In November 1998, the Lanark County genealogical website was created by Mr. Thompson and Mary Croft. Mr. Thompson has hosted the site for seven years and has continued, on a voluntary basis, to maintain it on his own since Ms. Croft retired in 2002.

This easy-to-use website, at www.rootsweb.com/~onlanark, contains historical documents, photos and family histories from many Lanark County municipalities. As part of his extensive contribution to local genealogy and to the website, Mr. Thompson has visited every cemetery in the county and has copied details from grave markers for people researching genealogical information. He has also photographed cenotaphs throughout the county and copied the names listed on them to place on the website.

Ms. Truscott describes Mr. Thompson's efforts as a significant contribution that helps people from Canada and around the world "to trace their ancestors' footsteps, and it brings attention to Lanark County on a national level." She says the website draws visitors to this area and encourages people to learn more about the history of the Lanark County.

Mr. Thompson adds new information to the website almost daily from his own resources and includes items submitted by many volunteers. "It is far from completed and continues to grow and get better and better each day," Ms. Truscott says.

"He volunteers many hours to provide this information to anyone with access to the Internet," says supporter Neil A. Thomas. "He promotes the history and beauty of Lanark County, he shows respect for those from Lanark County who sacrificed their lives through having the photos of the many cenotaphs in Lanark County on his site and has provided all the names mentioned on them, he has provided space for many people to share their pioneer ancestors' stories and backgrounds, and has spent many hours photographing and compiling the information of the cemeteries of Lanark County and created a database to help anyone who asks.

"His kindness has spread to others, and by his kind deeds, it has led to many others volunteering their time and efforts to this website, and it is one that Lanark County can be proud of."

Researcher Sylvia Droughan notes Mr. Thompson's work has, over the years, become an important tool for researchers and for the community and anyone with descendants from Lanark County. "Keith has provided a 'one-stop shopping' type of website that is user friendly and promotes the importance of preserving the history and feeling of community in Lanark County by offering his vast amount of knowledge and resources for virtually anyone who visits his site."

Certified genealogist Patrick Wohler wrote in the Sept. 9, 2005 issue of the *Record News/EMC* that Mr. Thompson's website is, from a content point-of-view, "a virtual researcher's manual for Lanark County. It is also a very attractive site and is easy and intuitive to navigate. It could well serve as the model for other GenWeb sites."

Many comments on the site's online guest book attest how much Mr. Thompson's hard work is appreciated.

"His love for the county shows through in his work and I, and many others, think he deserves to be recognized for his big contribution to this county," Ms. Truscott says.