

# CELEBRATE BEZANSON

## A Canada 150<sup>th</sup> Celebration – Glen Leslie Church Tour



One of the many events scheduled for “Celebrate Bezanson” was a tour of the Provincial Historic Site – the Glen Leslie Church. Saturday August 26, 2017 dawned warm and sunny – a perfect backdrop to view the Church and Cemetery. Wanda Zenner facilitated the tour.

The tour started with a stop at the new entrance sign and landscaping that had been finished earlier that same day. The Church sparkled after a thorough cleaning and had been decorated inside and outside with home-grown flowers and plants. The tour continued with a stroll down the new sidewalk to the brick “Donor Wall” that had been built to honor all of

those who had participated in the restoration of the Church. A few steps away was the “History Timeline” that had been installed by the County of Grande Prairie. Many made note of the Hansa roses that had been planted at the entrance along with the large boulders that were the original foundation. Once inside, many took advantage of the home-made desserts and drinks that were prepared by Evelyn

Ingraham. Wanda gave an overview of the restoration process itself. Many were astounded at the thought of the top



three rows of logs and roof being lifted off in one piece. She explained that although the Community had maintained the building over the years, the ravishes of time had taken its toll and the Church had reached a point where it could have easily collapsed into itself. She explained that the Community held a meeting and “The Glen Leslie Church Preservation Group” was formed in 2011 with one mandate and that was to restore the building to its former glory. She explained that once the roof was off, the walls came down easily. The old foundation was replaced with a new one with vent holes for circulation. As lead paint had been applied to the ceiling and floor at one time and along with the discovery of mould, all had to be remediated. The work continued with refitting the original windows with new wood where necessary along with the original door that had been painstakingly



Elizabeth Johnston

restored. By 2014, the restoration was complete and the “Group” received a favourable final

inspection report by the Provincial Government's representative. As such, the Church was designated a Provincial Historic Site.



The organ had been brought back and placed in its original location. Maryanne Halwa offered to play a tune on the organ and what a wonderful tune it was. Wanda pointed out the picture of Reverend and Agnes Forbes that had been placed on the organ along with a photo of Harold Bulford, County Councillor and Wanda Zenner of the Glen Leslie Preservation Group, receiving the prestigious award for Heritage Conservation from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. She pointed out the picture of Thomas and Margaret Leslie for whom the area was named after. Following which, she drew attention to the picture of the six teachers who had taught there when the Church was utilized as the school house for the Somme School District. Wanda also provided a binder that contained biographies of the teachers. Along the back wall was a photo of Elizabeth Johnston, the first secretary-treasurer of the Agnes Forbes Auxiliary along with a photo of the original bible (which had been stolen) that had been donated to the Church by Irene Hildebrandt.

From there the tour congregated at a stately new stone at the First Burial Site in the Glen Leslie Cemetery. The beautiful stone had been donated by Elizabeth and Gerald Fritsma. Wanda gave a brief history on Grace (Brookbanks) Parker and then on behalf of the entire Community, thanked the Fritsma's for their generosity.



Evelyn Ingraham

The tour continued on to the "Ingraham Mediation Area" that had been landscaped by Evelyn Ingraham. It is a beautiful spot to sit and remember those that are buried in the Cemetery.



A very special thank-you goes out to Evelyn Ingraham for all her hard work to ensure that the tour of the Glen Leslie Church and Cemetery was a success.

By Wanda Zenner