

Smith's Knoll Commemorative Landscape

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

September 12, 2012 2 pm to 4 pm

Attending:

Greg Armstrong, President	Stoney Creek Historical Society
Josie Bonaventura	Heritage Green Community Trust
Al Bridge	Friends of Battlefield
James Elliott	Author
Rob Hamilton	Hamilton Historical Board
Ted Jablonski, Sgt. Of Arms	Royal Canadian Legion, Stoney Creek Branch 622
Rene Lessard	American Legion
Robin McKee	Hamilton's 1812 Bicentennial Community Advisory Committee
Shelly McKinnon, President	Her Majesty's Army & Navy Veterans Society
Jerry Plumbley	American Legion
Bev Walker-Daury	Her Majesty's Army & Navy Veterans Society

Regrets:

Councillor Brad Clark	City Of Hamilton
Dick Preston	Hamilton's 1812 Bicentennial Community Advisory Committee

City Of Hamilton Employees in Attendance:

Kara Bunn	Senior Project Manager, Operations and Waste Management, Public Works
Ken Coit	Facilitator (Art in Public Places Coordinator, Tourism & Culture Division)
Sarah Ehmke	Arts & Events Officer, Tourism & Culture Division
Geordie Elms	Senior Advisor, Military Heritage and Protocol
Ian Kerr-Wilson	Manager of Museums & Heritage Presentation, Tourism & Culture Division
Susan Ramsay	Curator, Battlefield House Museum & Park
Debra Seabrook	C.A. Projects, Tourism & Culture Division

1.0 Background

The focus group was organized to bring together stakeholder groups with an interest in the Smith's Knoll Commemoration Landscape Project to determine those qualities, characteristics and stories of Smith's Knoll and the Battle of Stoney Creek you think should be commemorated within the landscape at the knoll. The results of this focus group will serve as the basis for design of the commemorative elements for the Commemorative landscape at 70 King Street West, adjacent to Battlefield Cemetery at Smith's Knoll.



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The group was shown a short presentation on the recent history leading up to the development of a Commemorative Landscape at the Knoll, a brief synopsis of archaeological investigation on site, the \$82,000 project budget and examples of commemorative elements.

2.0 Discussion

Following is a general snapshot of comments stakeholders provided in response to questions intended to guide the discussion:

■ What are the qualities, characteristics, and stories of Smith's Knoll and the Battle of Stoney Creek you think should be commemorated within the landscape at the knoll?

- Unknown soldiers plot – granite slab represents the tombstone
- Equal acknowledgment and commemoration given to both the Americans and British
- Heart of the Battlefield
- “High water mark” – the furthest the Americans advanced
- Respect
- Memorial
- Solitude
- Labyrinth that tells a story
- Peace garden
- Contemplative
- Open year round, not seasonal
- Incorporate various names for the site into commemorative elements
- Personal journey
- Quiet & Solitude

-----**BREAK & REFRESHMENTS**-----

3.0 Prioritizing

Following a short break stakeholders were asked to prioritize what most important. A consensus was reached that the terms “commemoration, peace, reflection and equal acknowledgment” were most important and that a labyrinth was most conducive to those activities. Discussions then focused on textual components to be added within the concrete and granite forming the labyrinth. An excerpt from James Elliott’s book



“Strange Fatality” was read, a first-hand account describing the evening battle by an American soldier. In addition the poem “On the Field of Stoney Creek” by John Glasgow was read. The following is a summary of that conversation and prioritization.

■ ***What story/ theme of commemoration were most appropriate?***

- Personal Journey and reflection
- Commemoration
- Memorial of battle
- Peace
- Equal acknowledgment and commemoration given to both the Americans and British

■ ***What form should the story/ theme take on using the commemorative stone elements within the landscape?***

“Labyrinth”

Possibilities for Labyrinth:

- That labyrinth take participant on a personal journey around the site
- Textual components– Excerpt describing the Battle from the perspective of an American was the top choice, poem of Stoney Creek was second
- “Hour Lines” that give an hour by hour account of the night
- In the centre of the labyrinth the number of dead or significant fact (exact # unknown therefore must find other way to represent this idea)
- A condensed history of the site working from the present back to the Battle
- Improved lighting (lighting will not be possible in the back corner of property because it encourages the wrong type of usage on site. The site is deemed an irregular cemetery and therefore not open after 11 pm – municipal regulations)
- A “look out” at the north east section of the property, closest to edge of knoll where excerpt containing the American’s description can be presented (Incorporating this description at this location is not recommended due to poor visibility of knoll). Perhaps a point within the labyrinth.



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