

On Sunday, October 15, 2006, I attended the designation, under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act of the DeCou House Monument located at 2350 DeCew Road in Thorold. The site is located just south of the St. Catharines City boundary. This monument incorporates the remains of a Georgian-style house built by Captain John DeCou early in the 19th century. The visible portion of the monument which was constructed in the early 1950's, after the second of two fires had gutted the home, consists of a portion of the original limestone walls of the house rising to the level of the lower first-floor window sills, a flagstone floor and a plaque mounted on a cairn incorporated into the inside of the rear wall (unveiled October 13, 1953). Beneath the floor is the original basement which was filled with rubble from those portions of the walls of the house remained standing after the fire and which were taken down when the monument was constructed. This monument is unique in that it presents the appearance of a partly uncovered ruin or one exposed in an archaeological excavation. The DeCou house played a pivotal role in the War of 1812, the Battle of Beaverdams and Laura Secord's famous walk. John DeCou was involved in many aspects of the areas history and development. He was a lieutenant of a militia company in the 2nd Lincoln, District of Niagara, in 1809. General Brock visited regularly at DeCou's home. The house was used as a store and garrison for British troops in the War of 1812. Lieutenant James FitzGibbon of the 49th Regiment took up residence at the stone house, along with a troop of volunteers. At one period while John DeCou was in prison, the house was occupied by soldiers while the Indian allies camped in the nearby fields. The house remained a military outpost well into 1814. The house was ransacked twice by the Americans in 1813-14. John DeCou's grist mills employed many local settlers and a settlement called "DeCew Town" came into being, with a school, church and blacksmith shop.

John DeCou became one of the incorporators of the Welland Canal Company when it was formed in 1824. In 1833, after the destruction of his milling business, he purchased 600 acres of bush land on Derquania Creek in North Cayuga Township, Haldimand County, where he constructed a dam across the creek and built two sawmills and a grist mill. A hamlet sprang up known as "DeCewsville." He was active in local politics there and died in 1855, and is buried at DeCewsville.

Source: program handed out at designation by Heritage Thorold LACAC.

More information can be found at Heritage Thorold's web site <heritagethorold.com>

The Historical Society of St. Catharines congratulates Heritage Thorold on this designation.