

Hot Docs

YOUNG FILMMAKER UNCOVERS A FORGOTTEN PART OF CALEDON'S PAST

STORY by ROBYN WILKINSON ■ PHOTOS courtesy TOM PANASIAK

FORGOTTEN AND ABANDONED landscapes have always held a certain fascination for 24-year-old filmmaker Mark Magro. Deserted structures with secrets that have yet to be uncovered are what drew the young historian to a property in the Town of Caledon located just north of Bolton.

Concealed from the roadway at the corner of Regional Road 50 and Old Church Road sits Cedar Mains Farm.

Hundred year old buildings, one of which has been reduced to blackened ashes after fire tore through its wooden structure in 2006, are some of the buildings the young filmmaker had plans to include while filming at the site in November 2007.

The decaying barn and church have been uninhabited for some time, but its story about the lives that had once flourished at the historical site was something

Magro wanted to uncover and share with an audience on screen.

After stumbling upon the landmark through an online forum, the Toronto native soon found himself digging up pieces of the past while attending film school in Toronto.

After gathering information on the property, owned by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, and speaking at great lengths with the Town of Caledon Heritage department, a 22-minute documentary named Cedar Mains Farm: A Forgotten Landscape, was born. "It started out as a short 10 minute doc and sprouted into a 22-minute doc from there," said Magro, CEO of Wanted Media.

After graduating from York University with interests in film and history, Magro went on to pursue his passion for film at the Toronto Film School. It was during his studies there that the story of Cedar Mains

Farm piqued his interest.

"I like film because it combines all my talents," he said during an interview. "I like finding history that's ignored by most people - that's my niche."

Uncovering history is what drove him to begin creating documentaries about forgotten landscapes. He's also shot films showcasing other "forgotten landscapes" in areas across Ontario including a documentary featuring an island in Scugog.

Historical records of the Caledon farm reveal a pioneer Irish immigrant family who arrived in the area with nothing except a desire to begin a new life, Magro says.

In December 2007, the filmmaker approached the Town of Caledon during a council meeting to announce completion of his film. He was awarded \$300 to help cover administrative costs to showcase the documentary at Empire Theatres



in Bolton. The documentary that cost roughly \$3,000 to create and had its debut February 16.

Those who have viewed it have given it "very positive" reviews, Magro claims. "It's an extremely low budget film," he said. Money to create the documentary was made possible by Heritage Caledon and a private investor from Toronto.

"Heritage Caledon was very supportive, they knew something had to be done," the filmmaker said. "I came around at the perfect time as they were talking with Toronto Region Conversation Authority about what to do with the land."

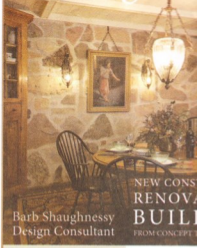
Town of Caledon Heritage Resource Officer Sally Drummond played an important role in the completion of the

past of Cedar Mains Farm, Magro said.

During his initial research, Magro said he was surprised to learn how little local residents knew about Cedar Mains Farm and the families who have lived on the land over the years. "I find it quite fascinating. I think more should be done in the support of local history in terms of getting out to the people, whereas Toronto just demolishes their history."

"Most people – especially Canadians – look at their history and tend to look at only the most important people and the most important places," Magro said. "I like to dig a bit deeper and find out about ordinary people and how they lived lives. Everybody has a story. I want to uncover history instead of just opening up a history book."

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