

## Counties Buy a Piece of History

*By Greg Peerenboom, Standard-Freeholder  
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The city's clock tower in Lamoureux Park is many times bigger; but now the United Counties of S.D. and G. has its own clock equally steeped in history

It was 1893. Horse-drawn coaches awaited in the chill February evening outside a banquet hall in Lancaster.

Inside, a crowd had quieted.

Two men stepped forward: the counties warden of the past year, 1892, Alex Stewart, of Kenyon Township, and a village physician, Dr. Andrew Donbar Harkness, of South Lancaster.

Each was presented with a mantel clock made of marble.

It was a tribute for the two men's tireless devotion in keeping Glengarry County a part of the greater counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

The two men had thwarted an attempt by a majority of township reeves and deputy-reeves who voted to separate Glengarry.

Legislation in the late 1800's allowed for local politicians to determine their municipal boundary, requiring only token approval from the provincial government.

But that vote was one year earlier.

Stewart and Dr. Harkness had spearheaded rallies to oppose the resolution.

They were aided by a prominent Lancaster Township citizen, D.C. McRae, of Bridge End.

McRae would later become counties warden in 1898.

Dr. Harkness died in 1907, Stewart in 1910 and McRae one year later. Their names, apart from families' memories, would only live on in several historical tomes.



Time marched on Dr. Harkness' clock was passed down from one generation to the next.

Then Harkness' clock its significance long forgotten, made its grand reentry - in cyber space on Theresa Taylor's website.

It was displayed along with many other prized belongings in the estate auction of Dr. Harkness' grandson, Andrew Harkness.

Taylor said there were 180 registered bidders, including telephone bids from across North America.

Dr. Harkness' great -granddaughter, Jill Harkness, said it was "a difficult chore" to watch so my heirlooms leave, but added it was her father's wishes that some of the heritage items could find a new home in museums (or public institutions, such as the counties).

Last Saturday the clock's chime rang up the bids.

On hand was representative of the United Counties, and after a competitive struggle with another bidder, the counties had their clock - for \$6,000.00.

Is it worth the price of history?

"That's the value in heritage, but it's starting to push the limit," said South Glengarry mayor and former warden, Jim McDonell, who has a personal connection to the clocks. His wife, Margie, is McRae's great-granddaughter.

But he figures it's one of the last steps in the refurbishing of the counties administration building at the corner of Water and Pitt Streets.

Other work has included retouching the large portraits in the council chamber, the addition of the Cornwall and Seaway Valley Tourism office and the redevelopment of the old jail for tourism purposes.

From a political perspective, McDonell said the clock symbolizes a time when it took greater resolve to stay together.

"(Splitting up the counties) probably couldn't happen today - the provincial government is a lot more interested in these things."

He said it's likely the council will have to decide on where to display the clock, although he expects it would probably be at the counties building.