

Artist creating 'time capsule'

Heritage Mural depicts St. Andrews scene from the town of a century ago

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ST. STEPHEN - With every stroke of his brush, Geoff Slater is recreating a view of the town from 100 years ago and reliving old memories with people that have a past connected with the painting.

"A lot of older people are interested in the mural because they remember the town being that way and it's been a lot of fun talking to them," said Slater.

"One of the buildings is now a restaurant where thousands of people eat, and it used to be a coal depot where ships unloaded coal for the town."

Slater is painting an old photograph of the view from the end of Market Square wharf looking back at the town in 1907. It is located on the side of the hardware store on the corner of King and Water streets.

Although the picture is a century old, Slater said, the town looks very similar to the way it does today. But every subtle change interests the citizens and tourists in the town.

"It is interesting to learn about how things were and uncover all these historical facts about the town. It makes it even more special for me and for the people in the town," said Slater.

"I think it is a time capsule, I really believe that."

Slater said the mural is being paid for by private donors that wish to remain anonymous. He painted the photo on a small canvas and then created a scale. He then drew each section of the scale on the wall and is creating the whole picture piece by piece.

He said the mural is a lot of work and he enjoys it because of the manual labour of painting something so large. But as an artist it has a larger appeal.

"A lot more people have a chance to enjoy my art," said Slater.

"A lot of people that may not go to an art gallery are seeing this so you reach more people with your art. And that's all I want to do is have people enjoy my art, so the more people that get to see it and enjoy it the better."

Slater said the mural adds a human touch and character to the small town that people can enjoy all-year round.

"My favourite part, and I didn't even know this in the beginning, is talking to people who come up and want to know what you're painting and why you are doing it and how you do it," said Slater.

"It becomes an interaction and that's a lot of fun for me. . . . A lot of people are coming to St. Andrews to come and see the progress. I've had people come back many times to see it so it's become a bit of a tourist attraction.

This is the third mural in the town that Slater has contributed to. He, his wife Andrea Mulder-Slader and mother-in-law Jante Mulder all own and operate Jarae Art Studio - where they sell their own folk art, pottery, jewelry, paintings and floor cloths.

The three of them painted a mural of the town wharf and Kingsbrae Gardens on the town's water tower and another mural of downtown and the Kingsbrae Gardens on the drug store located across the street from the hardware store.

This time Slater is flying solo and he has become fascinated with the contents of his mural.

"Other than moving a few warehouses, all of the buildings are still here. The

wharves have changed but the rest of the town is virtually identical and I think that is pleasing to people," he said.

"When they look at the mural they think I am painting it in the present."

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