

## GEORGE WARD, LONGWOODS AND THE WARDSVILLE BARN QUILTS

*On March 6 military re-enactors fired their guns to pay respect to the anniversary of the Battle of The Longwoods, at the Battle Hill Cairn on Longwoods Road near Wardsville. Every year, the Royal Scots march miles to the cairn and join the local community in a memorial service to remember the [Battle of Longwoods](#) on March 4, 1814. The battle will be re-enacted on the first weekend in May, at the Longwoods Road Conservation Area. Each year, the Upper Thames Military Re-enactment Society steps back in time as British troops attempt to expel American invaders in the War of 1812. “Hear the crack of the musket and the roar of the cannon. Come and experience life in the early 19th century. See the colourful clothing, smell the food prepared over open fires, and let us entertain your family for the day.”*

*Mary Simpson of the [Ontario Barn Quilt Trails](#) has provided an interesting bridge between a growing artistic use of heritage quilts and the upcoming commemoration of the War of 1812. FHH*

In October 2009, Wardsville’s quilt committee began designing a quilt to commemorate their community’s founders, Mr. and Mrs. George Ward. The initial idea came from Denise Corneil, an artistic community leader, who had caught sight of the rural folk art phenomenon called “barn quilts” sweeping the United States. She was impressed by the news that the Temiskaming International Plowing Match 2009 in northern Ontario had created a barn quilt trail featuring over 90 barn quilts.



Sue Ellis and Eleanor Blain: Unveiling of the George Ward Commemorative Quilt

Eleanor Blain and Sue Ellis, experienced quilt makers, quickly came up with a scheme to create a quilt involving as many women as possible. It did not matter whether they were skilled needle workers. It was a communal project involving as many mothers and daughters as possible.

They wanted a story line for the quilt. Ken Willis, the local historian told them the story of George Ward. In 1810, Mr. Ward was requested by the British Government to establish a stopping point for travellers along a section of Longwoods Road between Thamesville and Delaware, in Upper Canada – the Western District. A retired soldier with a young family, Mr. Ward was asked to supply provisions and fresh horses for the military.

Ward's family carved a settler's homestead out of the forest and called it Ward's Station. Two years later war broke out. On March 6, 1814, the Battle of the Longwoods took place a couple miles east of his homestead. Ward and his wife suffered many trials and tribulations. Accused of treason by the British, George Ward went to his grave in 1837 still trying to clear his name. His remains are buried in the Wardsville cemetery.

With a romantic and somewhat mysterious life line to work with, the quilters poured over heritage quilt block patterns. Thirty blocks were selected to tell the story of Mr. and Mrs. Ward. The feminine side of the story could not be omitted. It was clear Mrs. Ward played a critical role. Barn quilt block designs were carefully selected to represent the family's struggles, the Battle of the Longwoods, and the social history of that time.

Their family story was brought to life through the choice of quilt blocks, colours, and quilt design. When it was unveiled at Wardsville United Church May 14, 2010, the crowd gasped in awe. The following Saturday, the George Ward Commemorative Quilt was taken to Shedden for the 2010 International Plowing Match Quilting Competition where it took second prize in the group category.

And that is just the beginning of the story. Each of the blocks was painted on an 8' X 8' panel and the thirty quilt blocks were installed on heritage barns throughout Wardsville. The entire project is detailed on their weblog: <http://wardsvillebarnquilts.wordpress.com/>"><http://wardsvillebarnquilts.wordpress.com//a>>