

## The Denman Museum Re-opens July 1st

By Claire King

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, Canada Day, we celebrate our country and its history. What more fitting way to remember our past than to visit our local museum? Come and see what the Friends of the Museum have been working on over the winter months to improve the museum's displays through better lighting and skillful arrangements of artefacts. The picture story boards have also been revised and enlarged for easier viewing and the quality is now excellent. The addition of a large photographic mural depicting an early settler's farm and orchard, serves as an atmospheric backdrop to a collection of farm implements, some of which have only recently been donated to the museum.

This summer the special exhibition will be on "education", and will focus on memorabilia from Denman schools, as well as from other Denman community classes and workshops over the years. The response to the request for contributions from the community has been good so far, but the call is still out for additional memories and mementos to add to this exhibit. Museum volunteers will be present at the market throughout the summer to receive your ideas or contributions. Alternately, you can contact DD Fuchs (1413) or Ann Paisley (650 8533) As well as more recent additions and improved reorganization, the museum, of course, still houses fascinating artefacts that were donated years ago and which still take pride of place in the room.

There is a striking corner of the museum, right near the entrance, where a magnificent preserved eagle and a heavy iron mangle are located. Placed in juxtaposition, they seem to represent (for me at least) the two major components of the museum: our human history and our natural history. The eagle in all its feathery glory hangs suspended above the heavy man-made contraption. Those of us living here are very familiar with the bald eagles that fly above us every day, but, "What's the angle on the mangle?" You might well wonder. Youngsters who visit the museum are especially perplexed by this archaic object. They are told that it was a vital piece of equipment for pioneer families in the old days

"For what?" they often ask.

## **All about this antique mangle:**

This mangle was used to wring the water out of washed clothes: not an easy task, as the wheels that controlled the rollers of the mangle were quite heavy to turn, and it took a fair bit of elbow grease to do a good job. Iron mangles which stood 4 or 5 feet high were usually too big to keep indoors unless you had a very large house. So they mostly stood outside the back door under a tarp. They had a screw at the top that allowed the user to adjust the rollers according to the thickness of the fabric.

Compared to wringing everything out with your bare hands, the mangle was a very useful addition to any pioneer household. The only drawback was that it often destroyed all the buttons on your clothes. A solution to this problem was later found with the introduction of cloth buttons which could withstand the pressure of the rollers.

This particular mangle once belonged to the wealthy **Ormiston** family who came to Denman in 1891 from Scotland. It was transported here from Scotland by Windjammer in the **1890's**, via the treacherous route of Cape Horn. This was before the construction of the Panama Canal in 1914. The journey was extremely hazardous and lengthy; it would have taken several months for the mangle and other pieces of furniture to arrive in Canada and even longer to get to a place as remote as Denman Island.

Many ships never made it through this treacherous route and many a seaman died in the attempt. History books relate how a sailor who successfully rounded Cape Horn was allowed to wear a gold earring in his left ear, as a badge of honour-and was also allowed to put up one of his legs on the table while dining! (He could put up both legs if he had also sailed around the Cape of Good Hope).

This valiant mangle also made it around Cape Horn, and now lives out its retirement in our Denman museum, watched over by a local eagle!

I think of this spot in the museum as "*The corner of the wringer and the winger*".

\*The museum will be open from July 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of August.  
Weekdays and Saturdays from 1pm-4pm. Sundays from noon-3pm.