

# Collector's donation helps preserve history

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*Wheeling Countryside*

Jack Thompson could have taken his antiques, restored them and then sold the lot to private collectors, probably for a profit.

But the Northbrook man, a retired Navy firefighter and a horse trainer and carriage driver, decided that too few people could enjoy his rural artifacts. Now, instead of standing in a history buff's garage or basement, Thompson's treasures will find a home with the Wheeling Historical Society.

Thompson has agreed to donate a turn-of-the-century buggy, farm wagon, plow and other farm and horse-tending implements to the historical society for display at the Sicks family carriage house soon to be refurbished as part of the Wheeling Park District's historical park at Chamber Park.

The buggy, wagon and other gear will complement the carriage house, built in the late 19th century and will be placed in the carriage house in a display that will reflect the type of equipment a man such as George Sicks would have had as he raised his family at the corner of Milwaukee and Dundee Roads.

"WE FEEL fantastic about the donation," historical society president Lonnie Schnaitmann said. "They (the Thompsons) have so much knowledge about carriages and everything."

Thompson piqued the interest of the historical society about four years ago

at a grand opening for a similar display in Deerfield. Historical society members were told that, provided there is a display site, the society could get an infusion of quality antiques from Thompson.

It took awhile, but now both the carriage house, which will host a ribbon cutting ceremony Saturday, and the carriages are ready to be introduced. For Thompson, it's a fitting combination.

"I would rather have it where somebody else could be looking at it — a new generation," Thompson said Monday at his Four Winds Farm property off Lake-Cook Road, east of Portwine Road. "I could sell this stuff and put it in private collections. I just feel it should be where future generations can see it."

**SINCE GETTING INTO** the horse training and driving business, Thompson estimates he has bought, repaired and sold about 30 buggles and wagons. Many of them he used in his own business, either breaking a pony to ride or for driving a team of ponies in a show.

The buggy Thompson is donating to the society has seen better days but is in remarkably good condition, thanks in part to some work by his nephews. Made of wood and steel and trimmed with a hand-sewn leather dash board, the buggy was typical of that which a doctor or a lawyer would drive around town, Thompson said.

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