

The following is an address given over radio station C.H.L.O. January 18, 1952 by Mrs. O.R. Berdan president of the Paynes' Mills branch of the Women's Institute:

In the St. Thomas Times Journal of December 19, 1951 there was an item which read in part and I quote: "Please do not address letters and parcels to Lynhurst, Sandymount, Springwater, Paynes' Mills and North Corner, for there are no such places, so far as the post office is concerned". End of quote.

I am sure the department is justified in making that statement; my husband is a postman and I know of some of the inconveniences of poorly or improperly addressed mails, especially at Christmas time but does it not seem too bad that some of the oldest settlements of the county should be spoken of as No Such Place. Among these is Paynes' Mills and it is this little place and some of its peoples I am going to tell you about prompted by the item in the daily press.

Among the pioneers of this settlement were the names of Sells, Gilbert, Berdan, Munro, Wade, Lyle, and Payne. There were others no doubt who have evaded the records but contributed much to the welfare of the community, not so much perhaps in a material way as in service to their fellowman. Direct descendants of some of these families are still represented there and one may yet see the names of Sells, Payne, Berdan and Lyle.

But for the hand of fate this community might have been known by another name. In the year 1834 Henry Payne, a carpenter and joiner, left England by sailboat with his wife and family of two sons and one daughter. The younger of the two sons, 7 year old Frederick would have been washed off the tiny craft during a bad storm had he not been grasped by the ankles just as he was disappearing over the side. After many weeks at sea the little boat arrived safely with all its passengers in America.

Upon their arrival in Canada they travelled west, mainly by foot, over rough roads and Indian trails through the forest. After many more weary weeks they arrived at a little village on Kettle Creek, now the City of St. Thomas. Still not satisfied with what they found they continued their journey and about five miles north and west on a narrow dirt road they chose a tract of land owned by one Squire Matthews, a Welshman. Squire Matthews having already to decided to return to his native Wales, was easily persuaded to sell and it was there on the south side of the road, then known as the North Branch of the Talbot Road, Henry Payne settled with his family.

This road, dusty or muddy as the weather chose to make it, wound in and out among the forest and knew many a horse's hoofbeat and the ruts of the wagons or "one hoss shay", or the merry jingle of sleigh bells as the shiny runners slipped and squeaked over the frosty snow. It was, I am told, a quiet road, travelled by few and is now a great grey ribbon of cement extending from Windsor to Niagara Falls known as King's Highway No. 3. It is so busy during the summer months with trucks and speeding automobiles when everyone seems frantically trying to get somewhere else, one but takes their life in their hands to set foot upon it.



The tract of land purchased by Henry Payne was only partially cleared and so they set to work to fell the trees that they might have more tillable soil. Lumber was of so little value in those days that much of it was burned as it lay. Through the years the men tilled the soil with oxen and wooden plow, harvested their crops with sickle and with cradle, binding the sheaves by hand, threshing the grain by flailing it on the barn floor; while the women of the home raised their families, made for them the butter in the wooden churn that thumped and splashed as she wielded the butter dash in one hand and rocked the cradle with the other, and the family cat stretched its lazy self from before the fire to lap the little blobs of cream that spattered from the churn. She made for them the bread, twelve loaves at a time from flour milled by hand; she made much of their clothing which one might say began with the tending of the sheep, for they raised the sheep, sheared the wool, cleaned it, carded it, spun it into yarns and wove it into cloth. This cloth was often dyed with walnuts and wore, I am told, like iron. My recollection of my grandfather's suit is that it turned as rusty as well. The men's suits were cut and sewn by hand, much of this work being done by candlelight and the light of a blazing fireplace where hung the black pots in which bubbled and squeaked the mutton stew or cornmeal mush. Besides the material things of life, the parents contributed much to their families in education both spiritual and cultural, for they attended school mostly during the winter months, staying at home during seedtime and harvest. Thus many of the boys were grown men when they left grade school.

Time passed and 7 year old Frederick Payne grew to manhood and it was he with his elder brother who lived on the bank of Kettle Creek that established the grist mill and saw mills from which the village got its name, Paynes' Mills. These mills burned, were re-built and again burned but were not replaced the second time. The homestead is now occupied by the fourth generation of the \*\* family in Canada, the fifth generation living in other parts of \*\* Ontario.

In a diary written in 1867 is written "Cash on hand--nothing". At the end of the year they found they had realized a profit of \$18.11; but they were content. This diary also records such prices as butter ten cents a lb., eggs ten cents a dozen, 1 chicken 25 cents, six and one half pounds of beef 36 cents, which was probably as juicy a steak as we have to-day at 99 cents a pound. The teacher in the little log school house could obtain room and board for 25 cents a day and it was a blessing she could for she only received \$8.00 a month for her services. The people lived humbly and content, taking much of their joys from the simpler things of life, from the works of great authors, and from their bibles. Would we be content with such a life in a log cabin, with candle light, the wolves howling in the night, and hostile indians lurking everywhere? Not on your life, not even if we could buy a whole flock of chickens for 25 cents! We owe much to the courage and fortitude of our forefathers.

Although the community was named for the Payne Brother's mills they were not the first settlers there. In 1798 one Abram Sells came to Canada from Pennsylvania and settled at Port Ryerse. In 1818



one of his sons, Wm. Sells settled at what was later to be known as Paynes' Mills. Their first home was a log cabin south of the Norht Branch of the Talbot Road on the west side of Kettle Creek almost directly opposite where the mills were later built. Wm. Sells and his wife Elizabeth were the parents of 12 children and Mr. Scott McKay of the city of St. Thomas, a grandson of Wm. Sells is now the proud owner of this country home which replace the log dwelling about 1835 and still contains much of its original furnishings including a rug woven by pioneer fingers in the home. Mr. McKay spends much time there during the summer months and takes a great deal of pride, even as his father before him in showing anyone about the ancestral home. It was here on August 6, 1951 on the spacious lawn under the stately old honey-locust trees that the township of Southwold celebrated the centennial of its independence from Middlesex county. Here too each summer Mr. McKay entertains many friends and organizations. The ancient house and grounds must have a special feeling of hospitality towards the Kiwanians of St. Thomas for they have been entertained there for many years. On the farm has been established through the co-operation of the department of lands and forests, a demonstration woodlot that has grown into a beautiful forest and where abound many birds and small wild life. This is now officially known as the McKay forest.

Across the highway from Selldon, is the Lewis home, where in 1907 Mrs. Ira Lewis was appointed post mistress. Mr. Henry Berdan was the first man to carry the mail from the railroad to the Lewis home where it was sorted in time for the children to take to their parents on their way home from school. When Mr. Berdan left the community the late Mr. Neil Sells, then known as master Neil, assumed these duties. Until this service was established the people went to Talbotville for their mail, a distance of a mile and a half. We now have rural mail service established many years.

Time does not permit a complete history of this community and speaking on behalf of the Women's Institute I would not be a loyal member if I did not tell you about our local branch of the organization. In April of 1927 a group of women from the two communities of Talbotville and Paynes' Mills gathered together and organized a branch of the Women's Institute. Mrs. W. H. Sutton was the first president of the branch and was instrumental in raising the first money for the treasury when she made and sold for one dollar a loaf of salt yeast bread. The meetings were held regularly each month and in 1945 when the membership grew to greater numbers than the homes could accommodate, it was decided to form separate branches which was done in February 1946 with Mrs. J. R. Fatcher, vice-regional president organizing the two branches.

From this community have gone forth teachers, lawyers, ministers, and business men ~~not~~ to mention the many men who stayed with the land and are the successful farmers of our time. And we do not forget the fine young men who gave of their services in two world wars. Pray God we will not have to see them go again.

Much of this history is being compiled in scrap book form by the local branch of the Women's Institute. These scrap books,   
inspired



inspired by Lady Tweedsmuir, are known as the Tweedsmuir Village Histories.

And so though we cannot boast a post office as we did in 1907, I am sure that deep within the hearts of those who dwell within its bounds we feel Paynes' Mills IS some place, if for no other reason than that we have there a branch of one of the largest and one of the finest organizations in the world, the Associated Country Women of the World.

We would indeed be most ungrateful and forgetful of our heritage if we did not take up the challenge when it is said of Paynes' Mills, there is no such place.

Thanks for listening and my sincere thanks to C. H. L. O. for this opportunity of speaking to you on behalf of the Paynes' Mills branch of the Women's Institute.

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\*\* On January 27, 1952 a son, Lawrence Arthur, was born to Clair and Jessie Payne, making the fifth generation of the Payne family in Canada to live in the same home.



and

Mrs. Fred Bawden of Paynes Mills  
Mrs. Wm. Metler of River Road W. I.  
wearing their own wedding gowns of  
the year 1910 in The Parade of Wedding  
Gowns of the Past at the London Area  
Golden Anniversary Convention in  
St. Thomas, November 3, 1964



PAYNES MILLS WOMEN'S INSTITUTE SHORT COURSE IN MILLINERY

FEBRUARY 1961

FRONT ROW

Mrs Flossie Abbott, Mrs Ruby McGugan, Mrs Susie Smith, Mrs Mulligan  
Miss Connie Adams, Mrs Margaret Lyle.

SECOND ROW

Mrs Louise Collard, Miss Pauline Kelly, Mrs Margaret Adams, Mrs Jessie E  
Bawden, Mrs Eva Small, Mrs Essie Lewis, Mrs Dorothy Dawdy, Mrs Mary Oldham  
Mrs Violet Shiell, Mrs Agnes Gilbert, Mrs Fran Blackman, Mrs Etta EATough





**LAMPS ON REVIEW**—Summary Day for the leader's course of instruction in the project, New Lamps for Old, was held yesterday afternoon in Trinity Anglican parish hall. A group of the lamps which had received their 'shade lifting' treatment are shown above as they were displayed during the program. The lamps, which had been renewed completely, were the work of the Payne's Mills Women's

Institute members. Shown, left to right, as they comment upon the finished product are: Mrs. Morley Adams, Payne's Mills, secretary of the Summary Day committee; Mrs. Bruce Smith, North Yarmouth W.I., committee chairman; Miss Jeanne Armour, home furnishings specialist, extension branch of home economics service, Department of Agriculture, Toronto. —(T.-J. Photo).

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Paynes Mills Women's Institute Short Course in

COPPER TOOLING

NOVEMBER 1961

RUBY Silcox, Etta Eatough, Betty Cook, Olga Brown  
Louise Collard, Edith Auckland, Eleanor Meek  
Flossie Abbott, Mary Silcox, Margaret Adams.





Hat Course in Paynes Mills, September 1966

Mrs. Harry Eatough, Mrs. Tom Blackman, Mrs. Basil Harris,  
 Mrs. Gordon Lyle, Mrs. Lloyd Lunn, Mrs. Chas. Nichols,  
 Mrs. Leslie McFarlane, Ann Dadson, Mrs. *Payson*  
 Pat Blackman, Mrs. Albert Collard, Mrs. Wm. Meek,  
 Mrs. Alex Shiell, Mrs. *Fulton* Mrs. Doug Dadson,  
 Mrs. Bernie Gilbert, Mrs. Jack Shiell, Mrs. Morley Adams,  
 Mrs. Doug Lumley, Mrs. Vermont Pow.