

March 1979.



Neighbors Ross Simpson, left, and Brian Simpson of RR 1, West Lorne, are organizing a petition to replace the old

Walkers bridge southwest of Glencoe because they feel it is too narrow and unsafe for today's traffic.

Fight for new Thames bridge led by West Lorne cousins

GLENCOE — Cousins Ross and Brian Simpson of RR 1, West Lorne, are leading a campaign to replace the 77-year-old, single-lane Walkers bridge over the Thames River eight kilometres southwest of here.

Retaining the bridge — connecting Elgin County Road 52 and Middlesex County Road 45 — is necessary for area farmers to obtain supplies and transport produce to Glencoe markets, Brian Simpson says.

If the bridge is closed, a 12-kilometre detour would mean an extra half-hour drive hauling farm machinery between properties on either side of the river, he said. Some residents own or rent land on both sides of the river.

Plans are to present petitions to Middlesex County council April 10 and Elgin County council April 18.

Brian plans to contact neighboring councils in Middlesex for support, including Glencoe, where Reeve Frank Hamilton, a member of Middlesex County's road committee, said he will support the proposal and is certain village council will.

The word from Elgin County officials is that Walkers bridge will be open another five years and after that "it would be up in the air." A five-ton load limit has been placed on it. An engineering study shows the abutments are moving closer to each other, Ross Simpson said.

Brian Simpson said the Elgin engineering staff examines the bridge about weekly to see if there is any more deterioration. "I know there have been loads above the allowed tonnage using the bridge," he said.

The Elgin road department maintains Walkers bridge, Tait's bridge, five kilometres to the east, and Middlemiss bridge, another 11 kilometres east, billing Middlesex for its share of costs.

Middlesex engineering staff has reported to its road committee the three bridges are deficient and decisions must be made on replacement or closing them. Replacement was estimated last year to cost between \$1 million and \$1.5 million each.

No action was taken in July when Middlesex engineers recommended the committee plan to close Walkers and Tait's bridges when they are considered inadequate to carry traffic safely. The two bridges were described as "only providing area service."

The Travelling Store

In the depression year of 1933 Ross Archer of Wardsville was out of work. He spoke to Stuart Nisbet about a travelling store. Stuart thought the store business was a bit slack.

A truck with a built on store was made and stocked with groceries, dry goods, hardware, coal oil for our lamps and lanterns and small articles you would find in dime stores.

A permit was given and Ross started on his daily journey:

Monday-1st and 2nd Conc.

Tuesday-3rd and 4th Conc.

Wednesday-5th and 6th Conc.

Thursday-East of Henry Rd.

Friday-Crinan District

On Friday the ladies of Crinan doned a crisp house dress and with purse on arm, met Ross to get the weeks' supply of groceries, etc.

Every bride was given a corn broom-Annie Zoller and I received one in the same year, 1936.

Drivers I can remember were Ross Archer, Murray Linden and Bob Wilson.

Georgina Livingstone

An Early Childhood Memory

I recall an experience when as a small child I attended U.S.S. No.4 Aldborough and Dunwich. We woke one morning to find our world encased in shimmering glass. It was so slippery that the only way you could travel was on foot or skating along on your boots. Dad went with us to guide us on a less slippery route. We angled across the field south of our house toward the Walker Bridge. We had to avoid the roadway as much as possible. I can recall especially vividly how, after cautiously sliding our feet across the bridge, we climbed the fence into the field on the farm presently owned by Jack Dymock. From there on, our feet crunched right through the icy coating on the grass. I can still feel the sensation.

I remember a W.I. February meeting at Josephine McCallum's in winter of 1946 when the snow filled in the hills of the 2nd Concession in Dunwich. Ken McAlpine hitched his horses to the sleigh and took the women across his fields and up to Philip McCallum's. It was quite a sight to me to see everyone loading into the sleigh and pulling blankets up.

Annie Isobel Tait

My sister Elizabeth is attending graduate school in the Southern U.S. so she couldn't be here today. She asked that we would share with you these words about grama.

Grama Jean MacEachren was a storyteller, a very old storyteller. She was not a storyteller in the traditional sense, but one never the less. Everyone was always welcome in her home and treated to a hot cup of tea, something warm from the oven and a nice long chat. It was through these chats that I became familiar with her life and that of the MacEachren Clan.

Grama, as she was known far and wide, was born in Saskatchewan. Only a few days after her birth, her mother passed away. Her father was unable to take care of her, so a niece from Ontario was sent to bring her, and her 3 year old sister Kate, back to Southern Ontario by train. No one expected grama to make the journey, as she was only a few weeks old. The niece who went to bring her back had to leave her in the care of a fellow train passenger at each stop, while she went in search of fresh milk. Because it was believed in 1891 that a child would not live from the milk of many different cows, no one thought the little girl would live. Grama proved this folklore incorrect and arrived safely at her grandparents farm in Glencoe Ontario. Grama was named at this time after her mother, and the local doctor's little daughter who had recently passed away. She became known as Margaret Jean MacEachren.

With the fresh Country air and a farm living Grama Jean grew very strong. She told me her childhood was full of adventures and shared many a story with me about the games and tricks she played, the country fairs she went to, and the mischief she got into in the one room school house. During this time she wrote to her father out west and heard his stories about Louis Riel and frontier living.

I remember grama telling me she chose not to attend high-school because she didn't own a pair of good shoes, Realizing her mistake she always encouraged my sisters and myself to go as far as we could go in school. A task I am still pursuing today.

She married my grandfather John Campbell MacEachren when she was very young, and at this time they moved to the MacEachren Family Farm in Dutton, Ontario. It was in this farm house while I sat by the wood stove waiting for the dough to rise, that she shared many a tale with me. I will always remember her allowing my sisters and myself that very special job of dabbing the bun tops with butter, While always keeping a watchful eye on us.

In this farm house grama collected what I would call museum specimens of furniture and china. Among them spinning wheels, peddle sewing machines, and glass dolls appeared and all of them having a very special tale to go with them. Everything in grama's house had a story, and its no wonder when you consider the fact that she was born in a remote cabin in Canada's frontier and grew up in the era of horse and buggy. She saw the world

change like no other generation will. She witnessed the invention of the car, radio, and telephone, lived through two world wars, saw a man walk on the moon, and computers enter each household.

Of course to grama all this just meant she could watch the wednesday night hockey game in her own home instead of reading about it in the papers or listening to it on the radio.

In Oct 1927 Grama gave birth to her only child John Campbell MacEachren. Jack as he was known, later married his wife Joan, and fathered three more MacEachren's; Leslie, Elizabeth and Kathy. Leslie and her husband Ron presented grama with her first great grand child six months ago, Joanne Leigh. Grama held her and laughed with this new life and a new family member.

Grama was loved by all who knew her. She received so many greeting cards at Christmas time she could have opened her own store. Everyone loved grama for different reasons, but what I loved her for was the fact that she loved everyone and everything equally. From the family and friends she had, to the birds and squirrels that visited her garden. She took an active part in living life to its fullest. She lived on her own until she was well into her 90's, made the best pickles and preserves I'm sure I will ever eat. But most of all I never remember her having a harsh word to say about anyone or anything. Nothing went to waste with her, everything and everyone had an important role to play like a piece in a quilt or scrap needed for a hooked rug.

So on March 9th 1990 I heard of my grandmothers death and realized this occasion was not only sad one but a truly noteworthy one. Grama had lived for 99 years, she was a very religious woman, in fact I remember her commenting that she thought God must have forgotten about her and she just had to continue living each day to its fullest and right until he remembered to take her up to join her husband, son other family members and friends. Grama was able to attain what all of us hope and dream will come true in our life time. She was loved, she grew old, she experienced most of life's greatest technological changes, two of life's worst wars, she cried, she laughed, she sang and she saw the wonder and beauty of the world around her. Like any true grandparent she filled my life with stories, memories and love.

I couldn't have asked for a better grandparent, perhaps this is why so many of us called her grama Jean Today Grama Jean's body will be returned to the soil where all farmers realize everything must eventually go. But, her tales and memories will live on in me like a seed well planted, deep within the earth.

Goodbye and I love you Elizabeth.....

Written by Elizabeth McEachren
- Daughter of Jack and Joan
McEachren - Granddaughter of
Jean + McEachren.