

The Crown deed of this farm was held by a Mr. Wilson. James Mitchell of Mount Elgin purchased it from him, and later deeded it to his son, James Mitchell Jr. After his death there were different tenants, as Johnson and Rock, before McNeils bought it from the Mitchell Estate about 1950.

Alex and Evelyn started out with beef cattle, then switched to the poultry business and also raised hogs for market. Keeping hens in cages was becoming popular at this time, so Alex put in 800 cages, and let the remainder of his 4000 hens run on the floor. They graded and candled the eggs for various stores, restaurants, and bakeshops, as well as house sales.

A modern workshop with an oil furnace and fluorescent lighting enables him to repair equipment all the year round.

Their large two-storey farm home was remodelled by Mitchells about 1914. The ground floor has a living-room, library, double recreation room, an office, kitchen, utility room, and a bath room. Upstairs, there are two double bedrooms, a bathroom, two single bedrooms, and two hallways. In the basement there are six rooms. The furnace which originally burned wood and coal has been converted to oil.

Ring is returned after being missing for more than 40 years

AYLMER — It's easy to lose a ring, and much harder to find it once it is missing, especially 40 years after the fact. But the extraordinary does happen.

Mrs. Agnes Ashton, of 39 Dufferin Street was returned her brother's ring, May 25, after some 40 years of it being buried, unearthened and reburied again.

The ring belonged to Mrs. Ashton's brother James Arthur Mitchell, who died in 1933. The ring bears the inscribed date of March 23, 1921, so she figures the ring must have been lost sometime between 1921 and 1933.

How it was lost will probably never be answered but how it was found is quite a story in itself.

On May 25 Mr. and Mrs. Richard Smith were digging at a garden on their lot at the McNeil Mobile Community, RR 2, Springfield. Mr. Smith was operating a rotary tiller while Barbara Smith, his wife, raked the turned-up soil.

She found the ring while raking, took it into the house, washed and scrubbed it.

The inscription on the back read: "14 degree London Lodge of Perfection, March 2, 1921, J. A. Mitchell."

Mr. and Mrs. Smith took the ring to Alex McNeil, proprietor of the mobile park. Mr. McNeil knew of the Mitchells as the community park is situated on land once owned by the Mitchell family up to the late 1940s.

He informed the Smiths that the last surviving Mitchell was Mrs. Ashton and thus returned the ring to her.

"I was really happy to get it. I didn't realize it had been lost," Mrs. Ashton said.

"It's in perfect shape and is as round as it ever was."

The astounding aspect of the ring being found is that the land where it was unearthened and assumed to have been lost, had been bulldozed, levelled, tile drains installed and relevelled again.

"How after all this could this little ring come to the surface?" Mrs. Ashton asked.

How could it indeed?

The large white brick residence which was located on the corner of Highways 52 and 73 was the home of Lee Putnam's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Roland Putnam.

The verandah of the house cost \$800 to build. Bill Gracey hauled stone from Gladstone for its construction.

It had one of the most beautiful front yards in the area. There were gorgeous flower gardens, dome-like trees and lawns that were always kept trimmed.

Owing to an error by the contractor, this house had an unusual interior. Mrs. Putnam didn't realize it until she was making the curtains for her new home. The ceilings downstairs were 9 feet high, and those upstairs were 10 feet. A winding staircase went up from the front door. Upstairs there was a centre hall with bedrooms on either side, and a bathroom.

The basement was completely finished and they lived there much of the time, although there was a kitchen on the main floor too.

After the death of Nina Putnam Johnston, Lee's sister, this house was allowed to deteriorate and was finally torn down by Don Shackelton, after he purchased the farm.



Lee Putnam, outside his father's Roland Putnam's home in 1928.

In the background you can see the stained glass front window and part of the verandah.

Thomas Newton came to Canada in 1836, with his older brother David, who was returning after a visit with his family in England. They came over on a sailing ship and were seven weeks in crossing, landing at Quebec City.

Thomas worked with his brother in a flour mill in Thorold, but after David's death he moved to the vicinity of Aylmer, where he leased the Smith Farm, south of Aylmer. The farm was later known as the John Gloin Farm. In December 1840, he married Eliza Hill of Fonthill.

I understand he leased several farms north of Aylmer before acquiring 50 acres north of Aylmer, one mile south of the village of Lyons. I do not know whether or not he built the log house on that farm, but he was truly a pioneer of that community.

The old log house nestled among huge lilac bushes remained standing until 1908, when it was considered a too-hazardous playground for the children of David Newton and was torn down. As a child (Mrs. Elva Newton Howse) it was my favorite haunt and through my father's oft repeated descriptions, the inhabitants and life of the house became almost as familiar to me as though I had been a part of it. Perhaps some of the later descendants might be interested in a limited description of the two houses on that farm.

The log house, typical of those times in design and construction, was of hand-hewn squared logs, chinked with plaster on the outside, but fully plastered and wall-papered on the inside. It had a central partition and chimney. On the north side was the parlour with fireplace for heating, and a bedroom. On the south side was the livingroom and a small pantry with trap door leading to a small "dugout" cellar. In

those days, a livingroom was just that—a room wherein they cooked, ate and for the most part, lived, so it is not surprising that it was the largest room in the house.

The front and back doors opened into the livingroom. Just inside the front door to the right was the door to the parlour. The door to the enclosed stairway was opposite the front door. The stairway formed an alcove in the rear portion of the livingroom in which was a large fireplace for cooking, with brick oven for baking. Under the lower steps there were cupboards for cooking utensils, etc.

While the lower floor was a good size, the second floor had but two bedrooms, due to the low sloping roof. The rooms were heated by the central chimney and were used by the children, the parents using the downstairs bedroom. I do not know if Mary Ann or Jane were born there, but it was the birthplace of Martha, John and David Newton.

The brick house was built in the summer of 1876 and occupied that autumn. It was of cream coloured brick, square in design with double chimneys on the north and south sides, half of which were air vents from the cellar. It was of balloon construction—two brick walls with space between them, for warmth in winter and coolness in summer. The brick walls extended to the floor of the full deep divided cellar, the north half of which had a brick floor and was used for milk, butter, meat, etc. It remained very cold even in warmest weather. The other half of the cellar was not quite as cold and was used for storing apples and vegetables. It had a hard-packed mud floor which is still considered best for that type of storage.

On the first floor, center front, double doors opened into a small hallway. On the north side again was the parlor and a small bedroom. The stairway to the second floor was on the north side of the hall and alongside, some eight or 10 feet from the front door was a door to the livingroom. There was a small bedroom at the front and a pantry at the side with steps to the cellar under the front stairway.

The second floor had a full length center hall with two bedrooms on either side and a front door opening out onto a small balcony. With full attic, the bedrooms were square and the high ceiling throughout the house kept it very cool in summer.

A few years later an addition was erected to the west and somewhat south of the main structure, housing a kitchen and large woodshed, a portion of which was platformed for laundry and other purposes, and a stairway to the southern half of the cellar. Off the kitchen was an enclosed stairway to a large loft and a bedroom over the kitchen. When it was built, the loft was used for the spinning wheels and looms. Those were pioneer days and they lived almost entirely off the land, raising sheep for wool and processing it into yarn for knitting and for weaving into blankets, suit and dress material and carpeting. (The carpet on the front stairs when the farm was later sold, was woven by Mary Ann or Martha).

They made most of the clothing including suits for the men in those early days. When the addition was built, they added a veranda along the south side of main structure, with doors opening onto it from the kitchen and the livingroom, which then became a diningroom.

Continued on next page.

The Newtons left Lyons in 1917. In 1919 David began working for the Ont. Hydro at the Niagara Transformer Station and transferred to Queenston in 1925. There he became chief district operator of the Sir Adam Beck Generating stations No.1, and No.2. After 44½ years in the service of Ont. Hydro he retired and lives in Niagara Falls.

Many times the Ladies of Lyons met at Mrs. Newton's to use her new sewing machine or have a taffying party.

Mr. & Mrs. Omer Chalk ^{and son Claude} bought the farm from the Newtons and lived ^{there} till after he sold it to Bob Baxter in 1958.

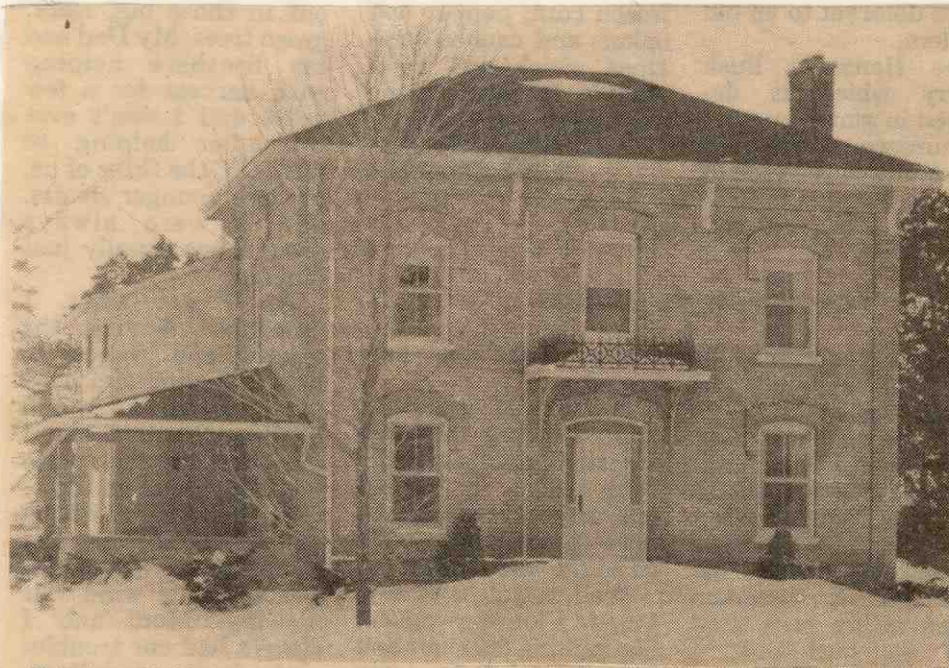
Mrs. Chalk was active in Institute work and besides farming, Omer bought and sold trees for lumber, often hiring Indians to dig out the roots to get lumber with a particular grain.

(A picture of one log is shown in this book)

Many of the farm implements were also home made, with the help of the local blacksmith, also some of the furniture. Maple sugar and syrup were used for sweetening. Salt for curing and preserving, and for animals, was the one expensive commodity they had to purchase.

It was a farming community, with little demand for any excess produce, so money may not always have been plentiful, but judging from the evidence left, it would appear that they enjoyed a better than average share of the luxuries of those times. It was good land and with each doing a fair share of the work, they prospered. Mary Ann, Martha and David all had musical instruction on organ and violin and voice training. They also had the best education locally available.

The foregoing was written by Mrs. Elva Newton Howse.



This beautiful brick house belongs to Bob and Marge Baxter of R.R. 2 Springfield. It was built by Thomas Newton in 1876. The Baxters have lived in the

house for 20 years.

The Baxters have done some major renovations. They replaced the original

addition, (added on a year after the house was built), with a new one. They also had their home sandblasted and rebuilt the wrought iron balcony above the front door.

The house is all double bricked with spaces between. Originally heated by a wood furnace, it is now heated by an oil-fired hot water system. The Baxters have also added a fireplace to the

house. Originally there were two chimneys, one being a flue type, the other an air chimney which brought air back to the furnace. Only one remains on the house now.

The farm originally contained 50 acres of land, but now contains 150. The intricate brickwork around the windows and front door, along with the Victorian iron work give this home a great deal of character and charm.

This was featured in the Elgin Market "Built to Last" section.

THE BIG LOG

Bought by Omer Chalk, felled by Indians, trucked by Edward Gibbons assisted by Russell Moore, Will Tanner, Lorne Kieksee, and H.C. Sinclair.

Big Log on Way From North Dorchester to Shipyards in Britain



The big log shown on a truck in the picture is rock elm and was felled by Indians on the property of George Johnson, about two miles east of Harrietsville, in North Dorchester. A veteran timber buyer says it is the largest he has seen without knot or limb and is perfectly straight and sound. The log will go by train to the east coast and from there to the Old Country for ship building. It was bought by Omer Chalk, of Aylmer. The dimensions are: Length, 51 feet; diameter at butt, 53 inches; at small end, 40 inches; weight, estimated

at more than 20 tons; 3,600 board feet. It was cut two feet shorter than was necessary in order to have it fit a railway freight car. In hauling the log from its site to the township road two large tractors were used and several chains and steel cables were broken in the task. Men appearing in the above picture taken for the Free Press are, left to right: Omer Chalk, H. C. Sinclair, Russell Moore, Edward Gibbons, owner of the truck; Will Tanner and Lorne Kieksee.



This huge log was loaded on the train at Springfield about the year 1940, on its way to the shipbuilding yards of Great Britain.



Here Omer Chalk relaxes against the log, having successfully completed the gigantic task.



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We have a little information about the Moss family and their four children, Grace, Douglas, Don, and Connie, before 1934.

The red brick house on the farm was built, we think, in 1901. That number is imprinted in the cement in the basement wall. The brick, we're told were made on the farm from clay which was taken from a behind the barn. This was a pond until Baxter's did extensive draining of the land.

M. O. Coates and William Coates purchased the east 50 acres on the corner from Mr. and Mrs. James Crawford and moved there in December 1934. Mrs. Crawford was the daughter of Amos Moss and her brother Everett owned the west 50 acres. The Coates' bought the northern half of the west half from Everett Moss. W. A. Coates sold the farm to Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Marsh in 1943, who sold it to Cecil and Edna Baxter in 1948.

Wm. A. Coates and his wife Aleta moved to Oregon U. S. A. where he became a minister in the Free Methodist Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Marsh and family moved to a farm near Crumlin. Mrs. Marsh, who was a talented singer, was much appreciated in the community activities.

The east section of the barn had previously been torn down and rebuilt into a drive barn. Baxter's remodeled the upper part into a henhouse in 1948. A large shed at the rear of the house was removed by Gordon Marsh.

The evergreen wind break immediately west of the barn was planted in 1935 with seedling trees provided by the Ont. Forestry Dept. at St. Williams. The orchard east of the farm house was planted around 1940 with choice trees from McConnell's Nursery at Port Burwell. The Caucasian English walnut tree west of the house was planted at the same time,

The perennial beds in the front yards were started by Mr. Moss Sr. and still produce an abundance of tulips, daffodils, and narcissus' every spring.

Abel Moss had a bee yard out under the willows beyond the windbreak and the old kitchen was used as a honey room. Coates' also had bees, but they didn't process the honey. There had been bees here for so long that every year, swarms would appear in the cracks where the

mortar had fallen out between the bricks. When the roof of the house was being replaced in 1977, two hives of bees were coaxed out from cracks by the windows on the east side by H. Hiemstra, who has a bee business. Mrs. Moss made taffy from honey and used to treat the children on their way home from school.

The verandah extended across the front of the house. Phyllis Baxter's wedding was performed under the arch above the front steps in 1952. This part of the verandah later became unsafe and was taken down and replaced with evergreen shrubs.



Inside the front door of the house is a curved stairway, and a similar stairway went up just inside the back door. This was removed in 1948 to make room for a three-piece bathroom in the upper hall. For this, water was piped from a pressure system at the barn. Up to this time, rainwater for household use was collected in a wooden cistern in the basement. This was soft water; the water from the pump on the hand-dug well about ten rods west of the house was very hard.

In the 60's the back entrance was moved to its present location and the cellar steps were removed. This made it possible to have a three-piece bathroom directly below the one upstairs. A garage was added in 1976.

BURKHILL FARM

Lot 10, Con. 10.

This was the home of Wilbert and Nellie Burks. They purchased it, the west half of Lot 10, from John and Ann Williamson in 1929.

On Nov. 23, 1849, George Goodhue secured 200 acres from the crown. Four years later, the Hon. Geo. Goodhue sold the west half (100 acres) to James Fullerton. He, in turn, sold it the same year to Lewis Clarke.

In 1863 the Hon. Geo. Goodhue sold the east half of Lot 10 to Ann Jane Whyte. This farm was later owned by James Martin and then by his son Harley.

In 1867 Lewis Clarke sold to Geo. Clarke from whom it passed in 1871 to George Robinson who sold it to Alex Steele seven years later. In 1887 William Williamson purchased this farm and sold it the following year to his son, George, who sold it to his brother, John, in 1905

Both farms are now owned by J. Grant Burks & Sons Ltd.

THE OLD McNEIL FARM

Lot 14, Con. 12.

This was the homestead of Peter and Nancy McNeil. Their son, James McNeil, Vera Moore's father, built the barn in 1906. The house is over 100 years old.

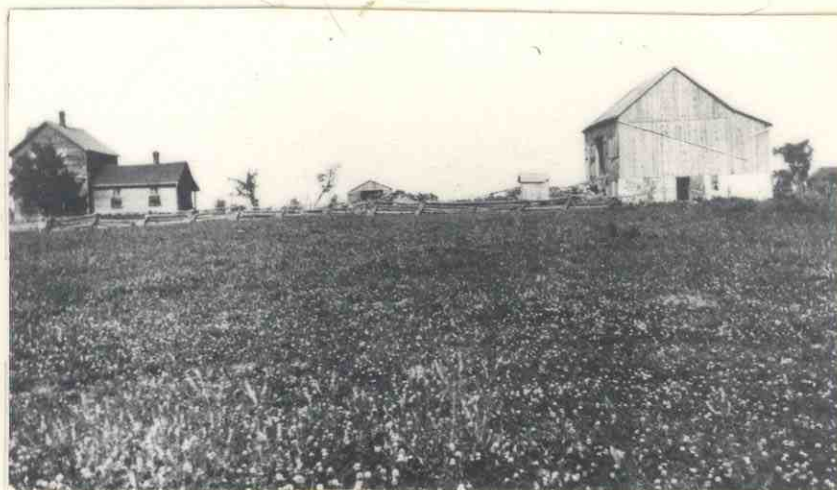
Omar Chalk came from Detroit to live there for a few years before 1921. He bought Lot 13 and James Ross and Family moved here from Blenheim. In 1952 they sold to an immigrant from Holland and they moved to Lyons where they built a house next to the Township Hall. Elsie Ross still lives there.

In spite of an unfortunate accident, when Ted Hermesen lost his right hand, he has remodelled the barn, lowered the roof of the house, and built a large silo. This facilitates the work in his hog and beef cattle enterprise.

"We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it, are the people who own it --- for a little while."

A former owner of Silverridge Farm was Billy Wilkinson. This is how it looked in the 1930's.

The old house was torn down about 1937.



This new one was built in 1945. The barn was also renewed in this period.

M.K. Charlton lived here with his family between 1949 and 1961.

Lou and Sadie Dykxhoorn acquired the farm in 1961. They moved in as the Charlton's moved out, between Christmas and New Years.

In 1965 a silo 16 ft. x 64 ft. was built and another was added in 1966. A machine shed 40 ft. x 64 ft. was put up in 1972.

