

Where Now? The Elgin Museum?

The following is a thought-provoking letter by Mrs. J. R. Fletcher, chairman of the Museum Committee of the Women's Institute of Elgin County and general chairman of the recent excellent Pioneer Antique Exhibition held in St. Thomas by the Institutes.

The full-week showing of antique articles depicting the life of the pioneer by Elgin County Women's Institutes is just completed.

It was successful beyond our highest hopes. The throngs of history-lovers that clustered around the exhibit tables each day, testify to the interest of Elgin County citizens in the pioneer life of the past. Many came back several times to be sure they had seen everything. School children who had been there in the morning came again at four o'clock to get a longer look—some brought their parents who confided to us that their children insisted they accompany them.

Some of the articles were crude, some useful, some lovely, but all

told in a dramatic way the colorful story of the pioneer settler.

Elgin County Institutes had a prime reason behind this display—to find how much interest there would be in an Elgin County museum. The sensational success of our venture really puts us on the spot. We cannot do this same promotion work again it would lose all publicity throughout. The story of pioneer articles was written in such an interesting and attractive way, that the general public felt the exhibit was something they must see.

Young Elgin

We were delighted to welcome the school children who visited the exhibit in classes, each morning. They wanted to know all about everything, and often taxed the knowledge of the women in charge as to the use of such and such an article. We loved them for their inquisitiveness and their inquiring minds. They were interested, but obedient and although they were there in droves, not a single article was abused or broken. Young Elgin its appeal, yet with our objective in mind, we cannot allow this interest and this support to lag. We must push on further and formulate plans for the next step in the creation of an Elgin County Museum.

Somehow a museum must become a reality. If our generation fails in this task, the urge to do so will be lost, as newer generations are too far removed from the day of the early settler to undertake the task.

Just how to proceed will be discussed at a meeting of the County Executive of Women's Institutes and the Branch Historical Research conveners, held at the Agricultural Offices at two o'clock, Monday, Nov. 1. Findings of last week's showing will be summarized and the next step discussed and decided upon.

Some plan must be formulated NOW for the acceptance of museum articles as many of our visitors last week told us they had museum pieces to donate as soon as they were assured a museum would be a reality.

The success of our venture was the result of the generosity of a great many people in a great many ways, we would like to publicly thank them. First and foremost our thanks go to Mr. Don Anderson and his staff. It was a great concession on their part to allow us to practically take over the second floor for a full week and to put up with the continual commotion and chatter. To keep our exhibit open last Wednesday afternoon meant additional planning and inconvenience to them and we do appreciate this courtesy. We cannot praise too highly the co-operation and kindness of Mr. Anderson and his staff. When our museum project is complete, a large share of the credit will be due to the generosity and interest of Mr. Anderson.

The Times-Journal gave us exposure now what a Pioneer Museum would mean.

ed in store windows were made, specially for us by Mrs. Noble Tufford, Miss Karen Shore, and James Young. We are grateful to them for their interest and support. Mr. Miller of the Anderson staff furnished gratis the attractive placards used near the exhibit as his contribution toward our museum project.

To our Historical Research conveners goes a large share of our thanks. They scurried around in their communities, weeks ahead of the event, obtaining for their display, the best pioneer articles they could locate. These were under their care the entire time and they also were responsible for lining up the women to staff their exhibits from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. no small task in these busy days. It was marvellous the way every woman rose to her task, many driving half way across the county and reaching Anderson's before 9 o'clock.

These conveners also had the momentous task of packing up their exhibits and seeing that all articles were returned safely to their owners. It was an inspiration and a pleasure to watch them packing up not one wasted motion or unnecessary movement. In less than an hour the floor was cleared. You really had to witness this well-organized "moving-out" to believe it. I could just think of one apt phrase "Folded their tents like the Arabs and as silently stole away." Our hats are off to these conscientious, resourceful women.

The following Institute Branches were the ones participating in the exhibits: Iona, Talbotville, North Yarmouth, Middlemarch, Cowal, Calton, Boxall, Payne's Mills, Shedden, Dutton, South Yarmouth, River Road, Tyrconnell, Wallace-town, Crinan, Kingsmill-Mapleton, St. Andrews, Eden and Bayham.

These same Institutes and others were responsible for the afternoon tea that was a delightful daily function under the very capable direction of Mrs. William Lyle, Sr. of West Elgin District and Mrs. Fred Hill of East Elgin District. Each day groups of five Branch Institutes, each group with its own convener, looked after the tea arrangements. It lent interest to have a complete change of table appointments daily. Hundreds of visitors helped swell our Museum Fund by patronizing our tea-table and donating generously in the little black pioneer "pot," placed for that purpose.

Mr. and Mrs. McCormick, of St. Thomas, added much to the success of our venture by operating their hand loom throughout the entire week and by displaying some of their handicrafts. Mrs. McCormick is a member of the Talbotville Women's Institute.

As I stated earlier, our project was successful because of the interest and co-operation of a great many people. We do sincerely hope this interest and this support will continue until we reach our objective—an Elgin County Pioneer Museum.

A very pleasing surprise was to receive two letters from the Wellington street pupils, one written by Marjorie Davidson on behalf of the girls, and the other signed David Burgin on behalf of the boys. Both writers thanked us for the privilege of seeing the exhibit and pledged their interest in a future museum.

Marjorie writes: "We learned a lot from the ladies at the tables who told us many interesting things. We all agree that a museum containing these articles would be a very good thing to have." And David states: "Now that we have seen those things used by the pioneers, we know a lot more about them. It would be very nice if the people could have a museum to know more things about their forefathers."

A special thanks goes to the citizens who attended our exhibit. Their enthusiasm and pleasure compensated for the planning and work that such an exhibit entailed.

Our radio station CHLO helped about the exhibit and we thank them for their share.

Posters advertising the event two weeks in advance and display-

MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 1957

1957 Institute Women Wielding Paint Brushes at Museum

Paint spatters don't have a chance when the members of the Women's Institutes in the district wield their paintbrushes at the Elgin Museum.

"We can't afford them," said Mrs. J. R. Fletcher. "We have to protect the newly finished floors."

Appealing through her column, Museum News, published every Saturday in The Times-Journal, Mrs. Fletcher has succeeded in getting full support from the women in the district.

"The museum is a reality," she says with pardonable pride.

But before opening day, the Duncombe house of history will have another story to remember. For the Elgin Museum has not been merely an outcome of words. Good old fashioned elbow grease has oiled the financial path and is still necessary to keep down labor costs.

Take this morning, for instance. The zero-hoovering mercury did not daunt Mrs. H. C. Duff, Miss Edna Scott and Mrs. J. McCormick, among others, who were at the Museum bright and early with their cardboard "to protect the floors," and with their paintbrushes.

To prove that Mrs. Fletcher is more than a woman of her word, the tireless worker for the pioneer project was smack in the middle of the painting bee. More and more workers were expected before the day's end.

HELP IS NEEDED

"We need all the help we can get," Mrs. Fletcher pointed out.

"This is an ambitious undertaking and we intend to live up fully to our agreement with the County Council."

The development of the project has been a long and painstaking process which called for financial assessment, acquiring of property as well as the naming of a curator. Not the least of the problems was the job of convincing the Elgin County Council that the women of the district would support the Elgin Museum and prevent it becoming a financial drain on the county coffers.

The Duncombe house, built in 1840, is co-operating with the efforts on its behalf. It is lending itself admirably to the plans of providing the ideal setting for a pioneer kitchen, a pioneer bedroom, an early sitting room as well as providing space for a money-making tea room, a miscellaneous display space and possibly a room for Indian relics.

DOCTOR'S ROOM

Of particular interest to the people in the district and a project that will be hailed from coast to coast will be a pioneer doctor's study. The medical room will be the first of its kind in the country and will have special significance due to the rich background of medical history in Elgin County.

In the meantime the women are out in full force to guarantee the opening day. There is still painting to be done and layers and layers of old paper to be scraped off the plaster. But the unglamorous, back-breaking work is full of merriment as the women enjoy each other's company and take a personal hand in giving Elgin County its own Museum.



PAINT AND BUCKET BRIGADE—The first arrivals of the Women's Institute members, who today have started work painting and papering the exhibit rooms of the Elgin Museum, are seen

busy with brushes and paint pots. Kneeling are (left) Mrs. H. C. Duff and (right) Miss Edna Scott. Behind, Mrs. J. R. Fletcher (left) paints some woodwork while (right) Mrs. J. McCormick works with a scraper.

Wires Were Strung Along Fence Posts and Trees In Early Days of Southwold, Dunwich Telephone Association

SHEDDEN—At 2 a.m. Sunday a telephone service as modern as tomorrow will ring into service from the new Bell Telephone Company exchange building in Shedden, leaving behind a company with a 60-year history rich with anecdotes.

It was in April 1964 that the approximately 400 subscribers to the Southwold and Dunwich Telephone Association sold out their shares to the Bell system to mark to quiet end to their company.

The company's history began back in 1906 when a single line system was strung from a fishing industry owned by Bert Clay in Port Talbot up to Iona where the terminus was located in a general store, which still stands today, owned then by J. O. Lumley.

James Milton, of Iona Sta-

tion, a lineman and director of the company at its inception recalled how the line was run up from Port Talbot.

"There was a lack of money to begin with," he said, "and we couldn't afford to buy proper poles, so we strung the line on fence posts and trees. Every farmer along the line subscribed to it, and since the line was quite often a part of his property, he was therefore responsible for repairing it when needed.

"Small wonder the service was not very good," Mr. Milton commented.

Mrs. Frank Silcox, of Iona, was one of the first operators on the line, and remained as such for 25 years. She was a daughter of Mr. Lumley's and can recall when the phone was first installed in her father's store.

"I used to have to stand on a box to reach the phone," she said. "It's funny now, but when we first had the phone, everyone thought they had to shout into it to be heard. Sometimes, I'm sure, they could hear us all the way to Wallacetown."

Mrs. Silcox's first actual duties as an operator were to connect a lead between the two existing phones in the store. After that, when more phones came into use, a small plug box was purchased and as the line developed further a larger box was needed. It was at this time, it was decided that the "switchboard" should have a place of its own, and it was moved upstairs to a room on the second floor. It was from here that Mrs. Silcox operated until the company joined with Shedden in 1947 and the switchboard moved to there.

Shortly after the line was brought to Iona, it was extended to the CNR station at Iona Station. After amalgamating with Shedden, the company then had effective coverage from as far west as Wallacetown to just west of Talbotville, and south to Fingal, with whom they had free service, although not a real part of that line.

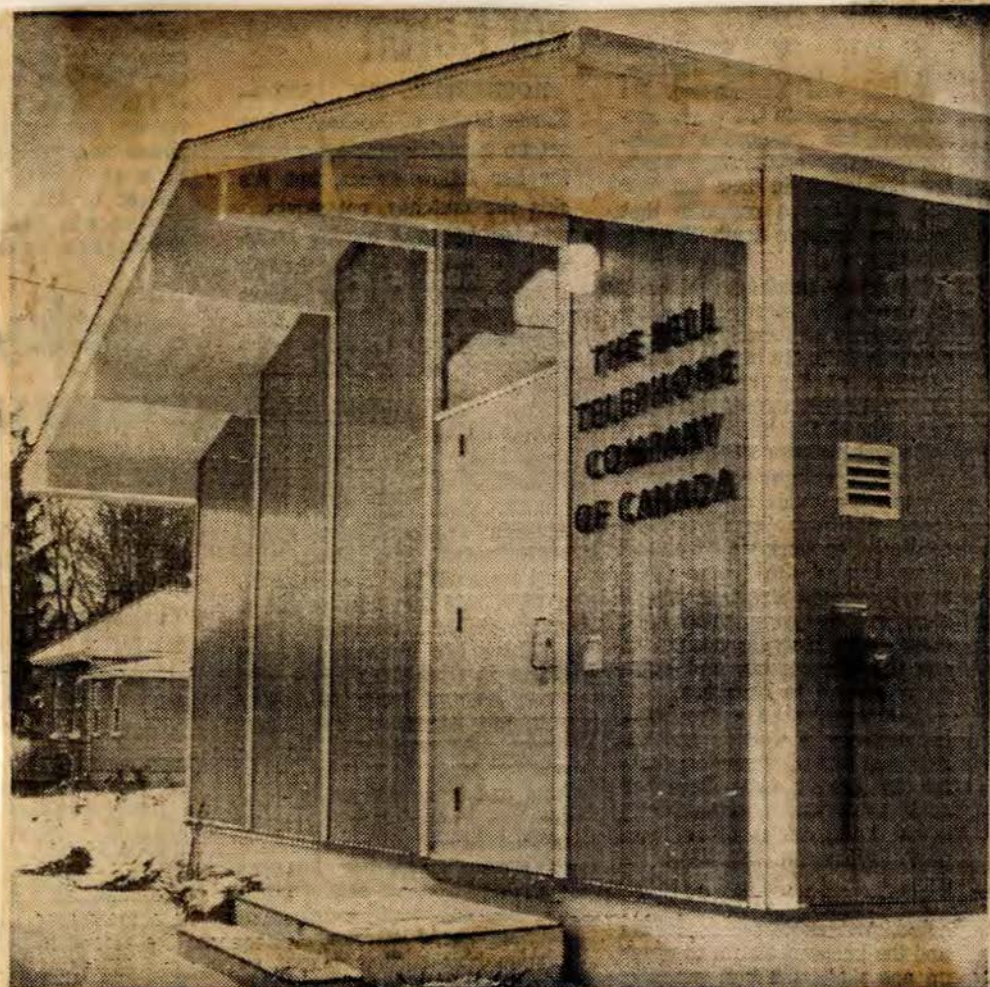
The first to have phones on the line were W. R. Pollard, of Iona and Frank Silcox. Mr. Pollard was chairman of the company from its inception, and with the exception of one year remained as such throughout its history. W. H. Morrison, of Shedden filled that position during the year Mr. Pollard was not chairman. Mr. Silcox was the first vice-chairman, and J. C. Louthier was its first secretary-treasurer.

Ross Carswell, of St. Thomas, a son of Mrs. Silcox, will participate in the opening of the new Bell system early Sunday morning. Mr. Carswell, who works at the Bell office in St. Thomas, often worked on the old line while he was going to high school.



FIRST TELEPHONE OFFICE—For 43 years the telephone office of the Southwold and Dunwich Telephone Association was located in this store in Iona, originally owned by J. O. Lumley, until it was relocated in Shedden. The actual switchboard was located on the second floor in the room at the left of the picture, where Mr. Lumley's daughter, now Mrs. F. H. Silcox, of Iona, was chief operator for 25 years.—(T.J. Photo)

January 9, 1966



NEW BELL EXCHANGE—At 2 a.m. Sunday morning the new Bell system will swing into operation at Shedden to officially mark the end of a 60-year history of the Southwold and Dunwich Telephone Association. The telephone association sold out to the Bell system a year ago. The new buff-colored building is located just north of Highway 3 in Shedden.

—(T.-J. Photo)

January 9, 1966

Nov. 9 - 1960



FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY MARKED — The members of McBride's Missionary Society yesterday observed the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Society in their church. Among those participating in the service were, left to right, Miss Jean Killins, St. Thomas, a charter member, and daughter of the first president; Mrs. Cyril M. Williams, St. Thomas, president of Elgin W.M.S. presbyterial; Mrs. Arthur Carter, McBride's W.M.S. president; Mrs. J. C. Telford, Shedden, charter member; Mrs. Cecil Dukelow, Lawrence Station, wife of Rev. Cecil Dukelow, minister of the church, and Mrs. Fred Bogart, a member of the Society. The occasion was marked with special services in the church, when the members were hosts to neighboring societies. A candle-lighting ceremony was a highlight. The history of the organization, from its inception in 1910, was presented in comprehensive form. It traced the step-by-step growth from its founding under the direction of Rev. Donald McKay, who was minister of the church at that time, up to the present. The first officers were elected and these were Mrs. Donald McKay, honorary president; Mrs. Henry Killins, president; Mrs. A. A. Turner, Mrs. D. D. McKillop, Mrs. John Meek, vice-presidents; Mrs. John McFarlane, secretary-treasurer; Miss Tena Turner, organist; Mrs. J. C. Telford, supply secretary; Mrs. A. C. McArthur, literature secretary. Major projects include the packing and sending of bales, contributions to the Goodwill Mission in London, Ont., and gifts to the Society's primary partner. It has sponsored the forming of a C.G.I.T. group, a Band, a Mission Band, and in 1955, an Explorer Group, whom aid in the group's work. —(T.-J. Photo)

Nov. 23, 1955. Sheddin

On the above date the Annual meeting of District 8 A. Fair Board met in the United Church - ninety four delegates from Lambton, Middlesex and Elgin County were present.

The Sheddin Women's Institute served a beautiful turkey dinner at 12:30.

Arnold Lee of Rodney the District Representative presided over a short dinner programme.

Mrs. C. E. Moore (Lady District Representative) introduced Mrs. Miss Ella Currey (minister of the Sheddin church) who welcomed the delegates to the church.

Roy Inch Pres. of Sheddin Fair Board, welcomed the delegates (on behalf of the Sheddin Fair Board) and also introduced the head table.

Mrs. Mrs. Bruce Leeson, 1st Vice Pres of Sheddin Fair Board - Mr. Clarence Charlton of Elderton Vice Pres of Provincial Bd - Mrs. Currey (mother of Mrs. Miss Currey)

Mr. F. A. Anderson of Lincoln District Secy. Mr. Alf McTaggart of Toronto (Assistant Secy) Mr. Lashley Pres. Secy

Mrs. Alf Turner (Lady Secy of Ladies Division of Sheddin Fair Bd) - Mr. & Mrs. Jean Bogart, Secy Treasurer of Sheddin Fair Board. Mrs. Mrs. C. E. Moore - Mrs. R. Inch. Pres of Ladies Division of Sheddin Fair Board thanked the Sheddin Women's Institute

for the beautiful dinner. Mrs. Hugh Hilcox the Pres. responded.

Following the dinner the delegates met in the Church Auditorium for a joint session. Musical entertainment was provided by Miss Nora Akara & Mathew Akara piano and banjo duets. Mrs. E. L. Baker solos with Mrs. C. F. Palmer at the piano. Robert Akara James Orchard & Jester Moore sang trio members. Mrs. Palmer at the piano.

A. E. Lee then presided over a joint session when greetings were brought by A. V. Langton St. Thomas, Elgin Co. Agriculture Representative. Minutes read by Mr. Anderson were adopted as read. Mr. Alvin McTaggart gave a short address on the importance of Rural Fairs.

The men delegates then returned to the Church school room to discuss their problem and the lady delegates (40) remained in the Auditorium.

Better ways of creating interest among our Canadians.

Better ways of exhibiting baking, clothing, art, & flowers were considered.

A question & answer discussion made a very profitable programme.

Mr. Orville of Forest City was appointed associate director in Mr. North's place.

Officers and Directors
of Southwold & Norwich
Agriculture Society in Attendance

Mr & Mrs G. Inch
Mr & Mrs. Bruce Leeson
Mr & Mrs. Ken M. Laughlin
Mr & Mrs. Dean Bogart.
Mr & Mrs. C. E. Moore
Mr & Mrs. Alip Turner
Mr & Mrs. H. C. Turner
Mr & Lloyd Atkinson, Mrs. E. L. Baker
Mrs James Oldham, Mrs. C. J. Orckel
Mrs Herbert Parks, Clayton Chamberlain
Elmer Lunn, Urquhart Welch
Mr & Mrs Morley Adams

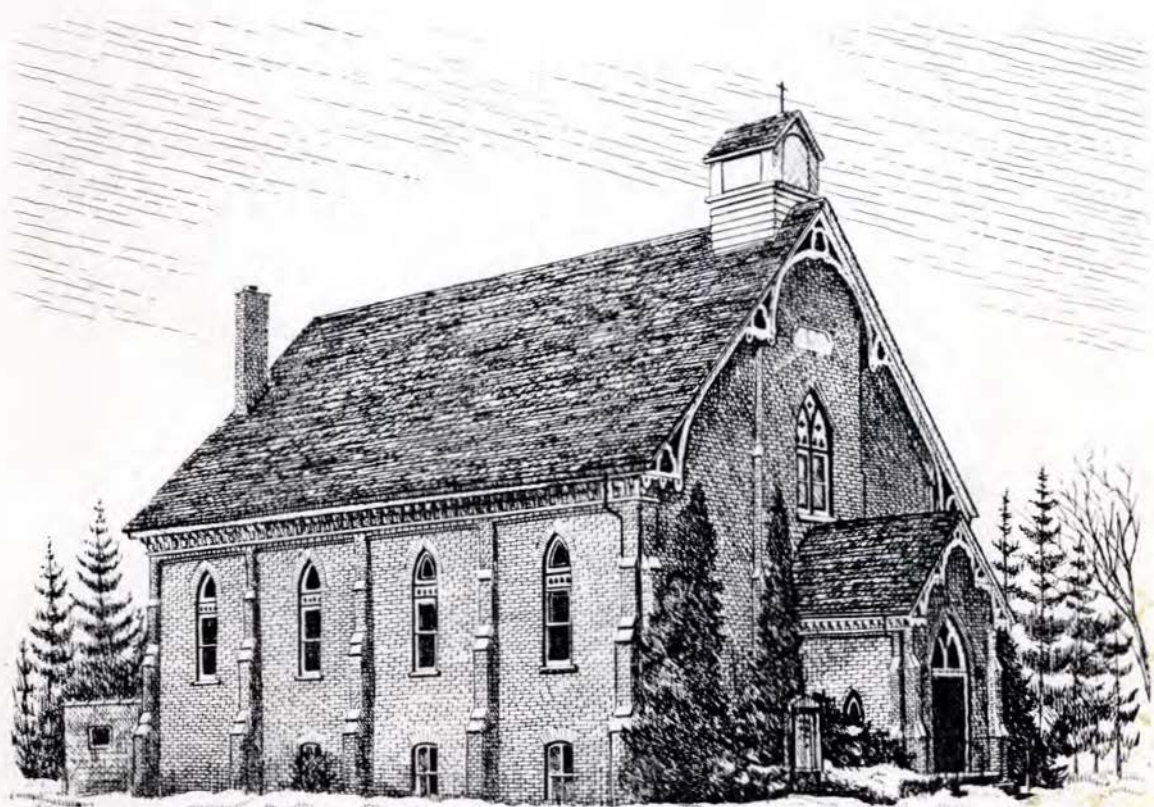
Others from the area
Rev Miss Ella Currey & mother Mrs Currey
Lloyd Atkinson

Muriel B. Moore.

BETHANY UNITED CHURCH

Shedden, Ontario

175th Anniversary of the Congregation



THE UNITED CHURCH, SHEDDEN. 1886.

JUNE 8, 1986