



THE OLD BLACKSMITH SHOP

This pioneer building is supposed to have been erected by a Mr. Keller, probably about 1827. He came from England, where he learned the art of making mud walled houses. Mr. Swayze relates that "they dug a pit in a clay bank, poured in buckets of water, scattered straw upon the soaked clay and set a yoke of oxen tramping back and forth upon the mud and straw. The wooden forms into which the clay and straw were pounded and packed were chopped from logs from the virgin forest".

During the rebellion of 1837 - 38 the shop was used to stable the cavalry horses. Several roofs have replaced the first hand-sawed wooden slabs, shaved from Pleasant Valley shingles. When John Oille purchased this shop about 1839 this slab roof was replaced by the first machine made cedar shingles. In this building he did wood-work, painting, iron work, including horseshoes, and made carriages and wagons. However, most of the early years it was a blacksmith shop where settlers' oxen were "slung up" and fitted with shoes and later horses were shod. Oxen and horse shoes, a broad axe, logging chains, wheel rims, and all kinds of wagon wheels were made and repaired in this shop.

In 1944 the Sparta Women's Institute came into possession of the pioneer shop through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Smith. Through the tireless efforts of the Institute members - new window sashes and frames were set in the deep casements, electric lights in cartwheel fixtures installed, a pine floor laid over a cement foundation, doors replaced and a fireplace installed - all efforts were made to preserve the pioneer characteristics. An old square piano was donated and pine benches were purchased from an old church at Tryconnel.

At the opening of "Ye Olde Forge and Anvil" on November 19th, 1947, some of the pioneer atmosphere of the gracious western Ontario community was revived when a Tea was given and well over two hundred attended from St. Thomas, Aylmer, Union and outlying districts. Reminder that Sparta was once a Quaker community was expressed in the costumes worn by two past presidents - Mrs. D. McKenzie and Mrs. H. Lawton. Their dresses of silver grey were pleated, their kerchiefs and caps were exquisitely sheer white lawn delicately starched. They poured tea from a beautiful one hundred year old set of ironstone china. Moving about to greet their guest, many of the Institute ladies displayed beautiful gowns of seventy and one hundred years ago - belonging to mothers and grandmothers who had been Spartans.

To be seen was an 1876 spinning wheel, a brass warming pan, a metal candle mould, glove making tools that belonged to the Jay family and which were used in their Sparta glove factory more than one hundred years ago, woven spreads, and many other antiques in keeping with the occasion.



Stove

Designed by David Roberts
and made in Toronto in 1862
took four foot cord wood and
heated the large hall in
the Roberts home.

In 1917 it was donated to
Ye Olde Forge and Anvil.

CENTENNIAL TEA

A Centennial Tea was held in Ye Olde Forge and Anvil in August 1952. A throng of guests from the community attended the quaint and colourful event where the Sparta Institute members, receiving were attired in costumes that dated back many years. This proved to be a very enjoyable afternoon.

On hearing of this event the executive of the Historical Society of London, asked if our Institute ladies would don the old style gowns and serve a cup of tea and gingerbread to a group of members of the Ontario Historical Society, who were holding a conference in London. Two bus loads and a number of car loads were conducted by Mr. Lesley Gray and Mr. Copeland. They also toured to the Friend's Meeting House and other places of historical interest.

Newspapers Played Big Part in Early Days

THE TRUE TELLER
INDEPENDENT ON ALL SUBJECTS.

VOL. I. SPARTA, CO. WI SATURDAY, APRIL 20/84T. No 3

THE TRUE TELLER.
PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.
S. PATCH, ———— EDITOR.
TERMS: Three Dollars per Annum.
JOB Printing, Executed at this
office, old ABBEY up Stairs.

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Farm For Sale.
The subscriber offers for Sale, one of the Best
Farms in Canada, Laid out in sections in
Yarmouth consisting of 100 acres. J. Steel.

A CARD.
Miss M. U. CHASE. Beg leave to
inform the inhabitants of Sparta, that
she is ready to execute all orders in her line
of Business, as a Tailorress.
Pear Grove West Main St.

Births.
On the 17 Inst. the Wife of Isaac Miller
Farmer South Yarmouth of a Son.

Deaths.
On the 18th Instant after a short illness
of E. Graves aged 31 years.

Enigma.
I am a word of 21 Letters.
My 1, 2, 9, 15, 21 is a Kingdom in Europe
13, 16, 19, 20, 21 is one the months of the year
21, 22, 23, 24 is a River in Africa
21, 22, 23 is a Lake in America
15, 20, 21, 22, 23 is a celebrated country in
3, 8, 17 is a Domestic Animal
My whole is a celebrated character in
Sparta.
An America paper says, in an obituary notice
that the deceased had been for several years a
director of a bank, not withstanding which he
lived a Christian.

Early printers followed copy such as illustrated in this photostat of the editor's dummy of the front page of The True Teller, published more than 105 years ago at Sparta. This was one of the earliest papers in existence in smaller centres in this area but was short-lived. Its style was typical of its time and many others like it played an important role in pioneer days.