

Rebuilding historic bee house

By J. J. Kirby
Museum Curator

In January of 1968 the Elgin County Pioneer Museum was the recipient of a pioneer bee house. Built about 1826 it was a building of historic and architectural interest. It survived its usefulness as a honey house and 155 years of Canadian weather only to succumb to the hands of vandals on the museum grounds. Thus was the bee house burned to the ground.

In 1809 John Pearce along with the Patterson and Storey families arrived at Port Talbot from Erie, Pennsylvania. It is said that Colonel Talbot carried the young Pearce boy, William, in his arms up the steep hill to his home. John settled a few miles west of Port Talbot and when William had grown to manhood and married Anne Moorehouse, he took his bride to his own farm a few miles north of his father's and just southwest of Wallace-town.

A honey house was an important building on a pioneer farm and one of the first erected after the home. Honey took the place of sugar as a sweetener which was not available then. Empty boxes would be placed in the bee house and swarms of bees caught in the wild would be put there to build their comb and fill it with honey.

Travelling Carpenter

William Pearce had his honey house built by a travelling carpenter, said to be Samuel Hockridge of Yarmouth Centre. He must have had a flair for the artistic since gothic windows were made as entrances for the bees and carved fretwork decorated the eaves. It was an imposing building (7 feet x 10 feet, standing 10 feet high at the peak) made of unpainted pine board and batten siding. The roof was covered with hand made split shingles.

It was from the estate of Stewart L. Pearce, a grandson of William Pearce, that this bee house was donated to the Elgin County Pioneer Museum. It was understood that at that time it was one of only two such buildings remaining in this part of the province. Miss Gladys Elliott relates the story of the bee house and its arrival at

the museum in the January 27, 1968 edition of The Times-Journal. It is also interesting to read Miss Elliott's description of the original treed and floral setting of the bee house as she tells it in the Hamilton Spectator of May 5, 1956.

Surprise

Toward the end of June, the museum and the many who have inquired about the bee house over the years are due for a most pleasant surprise. What could be more acceptable for our 25th anniversary year than the return of our long lost bee house? Resurrected in all its original glory of weathered pine boards, cedar shake shingles and fretwork under the eaves, the bee house is going to grace our museum lawns once again.

The museum has always been lacking something since the demise of the bee house. Now, thanks to the professors and students at Parkside Collegiate, past and present who worked on the bee house, it will be complete and whole once again. In the years to come they will be able to see it and realize that they have taken part in rewriting history.

A special 'Thank You' is due Bob Hatherall for the effort and cooperation required to complete the bee house before the end of the year. It will add significantly to the memories of the silver anniversary year of the museum.

We anticipate a fitting reception for the new arrival and to further commemorate its homecoming Pioneer Bee House hasti notes will be available.

Through the years these have been and will continue to be a pictorial memento of the original structure in its garden setting as sketched for us by Carolyn Curtis.

In conclusion, the Elgin County Pioneer Museum Board wishes to express appreciation to all who contributed to the construction and return of the bee house. It is only through such efforts of interested citizens that your museum can remain as a memorial to the past and its traditions.

Building Continues

The bee house which stood for many years behind the Elgin County Pioneer Museum was

destroyed more than four years ago, but a Parkside Collegiate project to construct a replica of the historic building is underway.

Parkside students undertook the ambitious project after the original bee house was burned to the ground on April 1, 1978.

Although early predictions that it could be completed by the end of that year proved unrealistic, "we have not forgotten about it," said building construction teacher Robert Hatherall.

Each year it has been part of the building course but the necessity of making it authentic with old materials or facsimiles presented certain complications, Mr. Hatherall said.

For example the Kettle Creek Conservation Authority cut the cedar shingles with an old shingle cutting machine so that they would be the same as the original ones.

Mr. Hatherall said he had hoped to have the house finished in time to donate it to the museum this spring but there is still quite a bit of work left such as the Gothic design windows and the elaborately carved fretwork under the eaves.

It took the students considerable time to do the fretwork on one end and the other end remains to be done.

The Pearce bee house was probably one of only two remaining in this part of the province when it was donated to the museum in January 1968.

It was part of the Stewart Pearce estate, following his death the previous November.

Mr. Hatherall is now hoping to complete the task next fall but said he is "making no promises."

When it is finished a spot will be waiting for it at the museum.

1982

June 9/72.

THE ST. THOMAS TIMES-JOURNAL



FOR THE FOUNDER — Mayor Eber Rice presents the scissors used to cut the ribbon at the opening of the Barn exhibition building at the Elgin County Pioneer Museum on Friday afternoon to Mrs. J. Robinson Futcher, one of the organizers of the project. Dunwich Township Deputy Reeve Duncan K. McKillop looks on as the presentation was made. (T.-J. Photo).

Museum's Barn Officially opened

The Barn, The Elgin County Pioneer Museum's newest addition was officially opened on Friday afternoon at 2 p.m. Mayor Eber Rice and Dunwich Township Deputy Reeve Duncan K. McKillop aided by Mrs. J. Robinson Futcher, cut the ribbon to open the building.

Both officials complimented

the various committees and organizations whose work and support made the addition possible. Mayor Rice added that the citizens had a responsibility to support the museum and its projects as they preserved the community's past.

"Although the county has supported the museum from the start, the real credit goes to Mrs. Futcher and Mrs. Gowan Young, who have been with the museum from the start," commented Mr. McKillop.

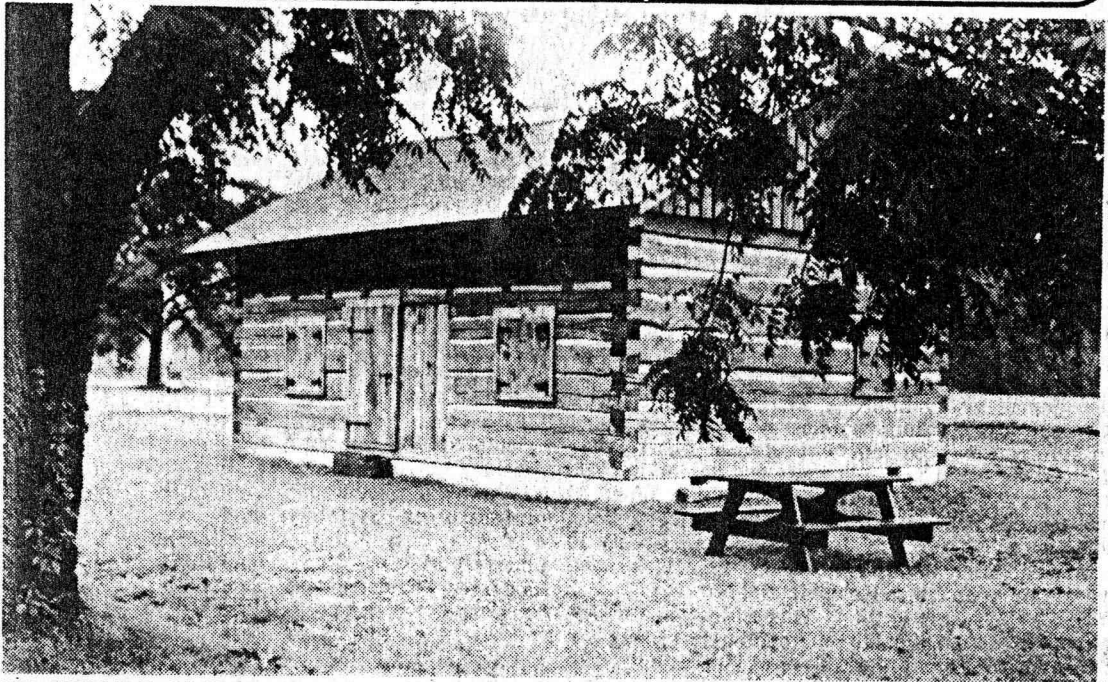
The annex, which was built to house farm implements and the things a pioneer housewife would use, was designed with

large doors opening into a lower level where tractors and buggies could be housed."

"It's only a start, it will take years to gather what we want," commented Mrs. Futcher. "But it would not have been possible if we had not had the help of so many of the organizations in Elgin County"

A plaque hanging just inside the door of the museum lists: The County of Elgin, The Maple Leaf Foundation, The Rotary Club of St. Thomas, The City of St. Thomas, The Department of Touristry and Information, The W. F. Thomas Foundation, The I.O.D.E. Chapters, and The Women's Institutes of Elgin County, as being financially responsible for the opening of the addition.

Lifestyles



150 YEARS OLD — The cabin built by Dan Patterson in 1834, which was restored through the efforts of the North Yarmouth and District Historical Soci-

ety, will be opened to the public during the Elgin Historical Show Saturday and Sunday. Many other activities are planned during the two-day event. (T-J Photo).

Historical Show this weekend offers precious bits of past

Billed as "the best show in the country" — eat your heart out, Michael Jackson — the sixth annual Elgin Historical Show is scheduled Saturday and Sunday at the Dan Patterson Conservation Area.

Sponsored by the Kettle Valley Pioneers in cooperation with the Kettle Creek Conservation Area and the North Yarmouth Historical Society, the show offers much more than history, although plenty of that will be dished up in an attractive manner:

How about a diesel engine that blows smoke rings?

Or a ride on an ox cart. If that's too bumpy for

you, take a hayride instead.

Anyone who had to park in Union last weekend in order to attend the festivities in Port Stanley will appreciate the acres and acres of free parking available near the site.

From 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. those attending will be treated to demonstrations of steam threshing, spinning, weaving, rug hooking, crewel craft, or buttermaking. You can even try your hand at cross-cut log sawing.

There'll be displays of restored tractors, vintage cars and trucks, and gas engines — and, of course, that smoke ring-blowing diesel engine belonging to Bob Radcliff. It's a 60-horsepower Fairbanks-

Morse.

Spare change in your pocket? A large flea market will offer bargains you can't resist, and there will be a wide variety of food concessions manned by groups famous all around these parts for their good food.

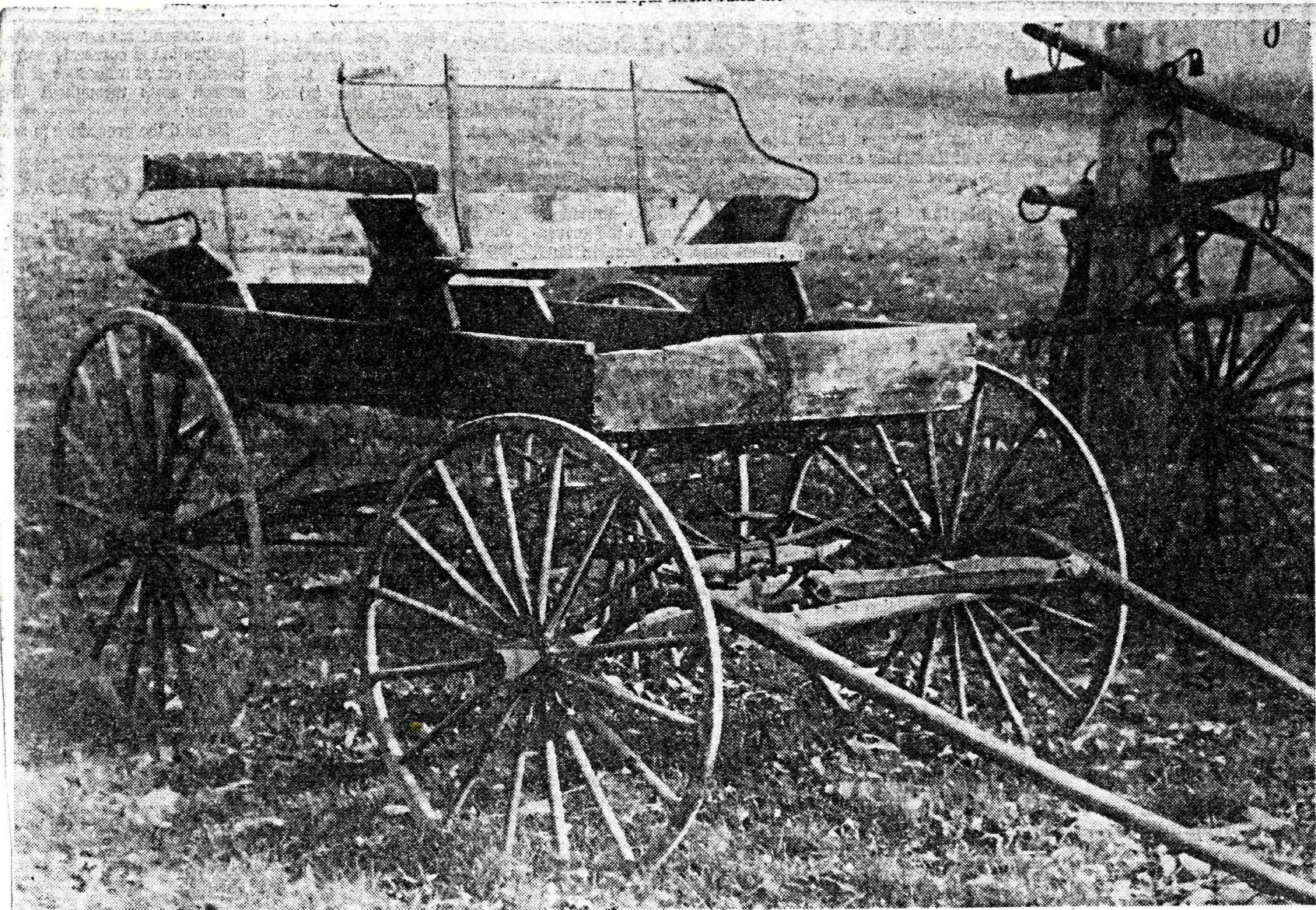
Kids will love the handcrafted miniature pioneer village, farmstead and horsedrawn equipment, while the Arthur Voaden Secondary School "After Eight Combo" and other guest artists provide music. If you want to join in, bring your fiddle for some "olde tyme fiddlin'."

That just about takes

care of Saturday, but Sunday's something special. The IOOF Lodge from Glanworth will serve up an old-fashioned country breakfast beginning at 8 a.m., and an outdoor worship service will be held at 10:30 a.m., with Dan Dale as speaker. If you don't bring a lawn chair you'll have to sit on your fist and lean back on your thumb, as the old saying goes.

And both days, of course, there will be the star of the show — the Dan Patterson cabin itself. It's now 150 years old and has been furnished in period furnishings for the show. It will also contain special displays of historical interest.

There is a small admission charge for adults, and children under 12 will be admitted free.



ANTIQUE WAGON — Every year, Canadians and their visitors head for the countryside to enjoy the riot of color offered by Canada's autumn. One of the rewards of a drive through Elgin County's rural areas is not

only fall's splendor but also the discovery of picturesque scenes such as this old wooden wagon in Sparta. Rural Elgin stretches about 70 miles from east to west. — (T-J Photo by Brian Wilsdon).

Sat. Oct 25/78

WALLACETOWN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

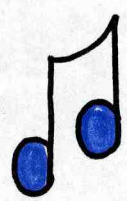
invite you to view

THE TWEEDSMUIR HISTORY BOOKS

Date: Sunday Oct. 16/94

Time: 1:30-4:00 P.M.

Place: Wallacetown Community Center



MUSIC

REFRESHMENTS

SOCIAL TIME



Our plans are to publish a
Tweedsmuir History Book on our local
history
Donations to Book Fund gratefully accepted