

*Norma Schneckenberger of RR #3 Rodney wrote
up this History on the Octagonal Barn. May 2002.*

OCTAGONAL BARN

Municipality of West Elgin aka Aldborough Township, Concession 7, SE ¼ lot 20

The property on which this barn is situated has a long history, for much of which Charles W. Baker or his descendants owned it. One hundred acres of virgin land consisting of S ½ 20 was purchased 3 Dec 1872 (registered 2 Jan 1873, Instrument Number 2937) from Ann G Macbeth Verschoyle and Cronyn & William P R Street by Charles W Baker. It appears that he was born 15 Jan 1808 at Wallace Bay, Cumberland County, Nova Scotia of parents of English heritage. He married 2 Oct 1845 Mary Graham Tuttle whose family left US after the War of Independence and settled in Nova Scotia. The Tuttle may have been United Empire Loyalists, but there is no proof at this time. Eight children were born to this couple at Wallace Bay, Cumberland County: George William 25 June 1846; Caroline Elizabeth 23 Aug 1847; Martha Anne 26 Nov 1848; Charles Edward 3 Sept 1850; Herbert Thomas 7 Apr 1852; Rebecca Jane 21 Mar 1855; Mary Graham Tuttle 1 Apr 1857; Sarah Louisa 20 Dec 1858. Charles' wife, Mary may have died in Nova Scotia as he is a widower in 1871 census of Aldborough and her grave cannot be found locally. One might romanticize and conclude that her death prompted Charles to leave Nova Scotia. What enticed him to come to Aldborough may never be known, but one might conclude that he followed a friend or relative. History proves that this is often the case.

As previously stated, the family first appears in the 1871 Aldborough census. Charles W, having reached an advance age for that period, began to divest himself of his land in the early 1880's. One could surmise that his health had begun to deteriorate. He first sold Wy ½ of SW ¼ 20 consisting of 25 acres to his son Charles E. on 23 Dec 1881 and in the following year, 14 Nov 1882, Ey ½ of SW ¼ (25 acres) to James S. and Hiram L. Shippey. On 15 Nov 1882, the remaining 50 acres (SE ¼ 20) was sold to another son, Herbert Thomas. It was on this land that the barn in question was eventually constructed. The father, Charles W., lived almost ten more years, dying on 1 May 1892. He is buried with his son, Charles E. and family in Gillies Cemetery on Thompson Line, the only cemetery in the vicinity of West Lorne at that time.

The focus of this article now turns to Herbert Thomas Baker, as he owned the property when the BARN was constructed. Having established himself on SE ¼ 20, Herbert married Charlotte, daughter of Francis and Martha Hookway, probably in 1883. At this time, it is known that two children were born: Laura Elizabeth 30 Nov 1884 and Francis William 24 Mar 1890. Aldborough assessment rolls for 1882 - 1889 shows Herbert as freeholder of the property. The same rolls for 1890 - 1894 inclusive show not only Herbert as freeholder, but also a tenant. Based on this evidence as well as the fact that Herbert's age was not noted for those years, but for all others, one can assume that Herbert was absent from the farm. In addition, Herbert and his family were not enumerated in 1891 census of Aldborough. Marie Spence, an artist who was commissioned to do a painting of the BARN, interviewed individuals and found that Baker family lore stated that Herbert and his family left for the Dakotas when their son Francis, was a baby. This date corresponds to the year when a tenant was first in charge of the farm. According to the same family story, the climate in the Dakotas was severe

*Photos by Helen
VAN BRENK*

Octagonal Barn.



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and the family subsequently, returned to Aldborough. Assessment rolls indicate that this latest move probably occurred in late 1894 or early 1895 as the tenant was still present in 1894, while Herbert, with his age noted, were solely assessed in 1895. The assessment varied only by \$50.00 in the years from 1895 to 1899. From 1899 to 1900 the value assessed increased \$350, from \$950 to \$1300 and from 1900 to 1901 by \$150 from \$1300 to \$1450. After 1901 the assessed value fluctuated by \$100 until 1905. Herbert and his family, Charlotte, Laura E , Francis W and William Hookway, probably Charlotte's father were enumerated in 1905 census of Aldborough. Based on the foregoing and lacking definitive evidence, the author submits that:

1. Herbert and family left Aldborough in the spring of 1889, probably accompanied by Charlotte's family as they are also absent from 1891 census;
2. They remained in the Dakotas where the construction of octagonal or circular barns was popular. There may be a possibility that Herbert received free land there which he later sold, thereby enabling him to build the Barn when he returned in 1895;
3. The BARN was constructed in the fall of 1899.

In the assessment of 1911 both Thomas Baker and Frank W Baker are named, however, no legal document was drawn on the land until 18 May 1928 shortly after Herbert's death on 2 Mar 1928. His wife, Charlotte Hookway, had predeceased him in 1917. Both are buried in Evergreen Cemetery in West Lorne. An instrument (#23292) in the Elgin Registry Office dated 18 May 1928 (registered 19 May 1928) conveys the property to Frank W Baker and Rena Baker with compensation to Frank's sister, Laura E Sterling as stipulated in Thomas' will. Rena died in 1932 and, at that time the property passed to Frank. It remained in his name until 7 Nov 1958 (Instr #32551, registered 13 Nov 1958) when Milutia and Natalie Savic purchased it. This property had been in the hands of the Baker family for 86 years and the decision to sell must have been a gut wrenching one.

As the land had seen changes, so too had the BARN. At some point a rectangular section had been added to accommodate the increased herd, as the picture depicted by London artist, George P Rickard, includes the addition. Later this addition had been removed as Marie Spence's painting shows only the octagon.



LONDON AREA
WOMEN'S INSTITUTE



88th ANNUAL CONVENTION

THEME:
"LET PEACE BEGIN WITH ME"

LOCATION:
The SOUTHWOLD KEYSTONE COMPLEX
35921 Talbot Line - County Road No. 3
SHEDDEN, ONTARIO
Telephone (519) 764-2260

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2002

SUBDIVISION 18:
MIDDLESEX EAST, MIDDLESEX NORTHWEST,
ELGIN COUNTY

SUBDIVISION 19:
PERTH SOUTH, HURON SOUTH, HURON WEST,
OXFORD DISTRICT



Back Row - Sally McIntyre - Helen VAN BRENK - Dot Monteith, Kathy Minema - Laurie LeJay - Peg Wite.
Front Row Darlene Ford - Joan Johnston - Kay Lillef - Ruby McEugan.

Kathy Minnema
Darlene Ford & Sally M'Intyre

Back Row



Front Row

Joan Johnson - Kay Lilley, Dorothy Lamb, Dorothea Monteith.

Oct 29th 2002



Hearing lunch at the 88th Annual Conv. London Area.



John Johnston

Kay Lilley, Dorothy Lamb



1 Dorothea Monteith, 2 Sally M'Intyre -
3 Darlene Ford

ST THOMAS Oct 30th 2002



Women's Institute member Rosina Morris of RR 1, Embro, Ont., demonstrates a handful of the 400 finger puppets she has crafted during the past year for young patients at the Children's Hospital of Western Ontario, London. (T-J photo)



London Area Women's Institute held their 88th Annual Convention at the Keystone Complex in Shedden on October 29. Pictured are Mary Veenstra (President Elgin County), Dianne Orr (President Federated Womens Institute) and Helen VanBrenk, (President Wallacetown Women's Institute).

CHRONICLE Nov 30 / 2002

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WI not stuck in 19th century

By ERIC BUNNELL
TIMES-JOURNAL STAFF

SHEDDEN — Loss of outpatient services at a local hospital.

Commercial development of farmland.

Elimination of music programs in elementary schools.

All — and more — are issues which have concerned local Women's Institutes during the past year in the London, Ont., area.

Although seen by some as a 19th-century organization in a 21st century world, nothing could be farther from the truth, says Pauline Lindsay of RR 6, St. Thomas.

No image problem here, says Lindsay, past president of the London Area WI which held its annual meeting Tuesday at the Keystone Complex, and the area's 2001-2002 lobbying convener.

"We're a rural organization," she says.

"So rural people know what we're about."

Founded in 1897 in Canada and, now, worldwide, the WI is very much about rural concerns in 2002 — among them, a relatively new partnership between the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario and health agencies to disseminate health in-

formation to rural women.

It's called ROSE — Rural Ontario Sharing Education for women.

Lindsay joined the WI about 22 years ago. Her mother had been a member.

"I feel it's a very worthwhile organization. It does a lot of good."

Among speakers at yesterday's conference, which attracted about 250 delegates, were FWIO president Dianne Orr of Arthur, Ont. and, at a dinner which ended the day, Olympic curling coach Jim Waite of St. Thomas.

