

A Vision for the Past

50 Years and Counting

THE ORIGINS OF THE ELGIN COUNTY MUSEUM can be found in the work of the Women's Institute branches that began to compile the history of Elgin's communities in the 1930s. Across Ontario the Women's Institute branches, the first of which was founded in 1897 by Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, thrived in an era when the province was still largely rural in character. The organization mounted campaigns for pasteurization, farm safety, and improved nutrition and safety in the home and have been instrumental in the improvement of cultural life for those in small rural communities.



Mrs. Dorothy Futcher

It was a logical step for the branches which had already preserved the written record of their communities to begin a movement to preserve the artifacts of everyday life. The WI's had played a role in the establishment of museums in other areas such as Grey County where they had opened a museum in an old stone house in Owen Sound.

Elgin's WI branches soon found themselves at the forefront of the county museum movement thanks largely to the leadership of one-time Middlemarch branch president Mrs. Dorothy Futcher. Mrs. Futcher had served as president of the Ontario Federation of Institutes and had represented the Federation at a meeting of the Associated Country Women of the World in Denmark in 1950. In 1954 she brought together a group of people who shared a vision for a county museum and led them through three years of planning, fundraising and collections development.

Her greatest achievement was the extensive community support she was able to generate. She promoted the idea of a museum through her own column in the *Times-Journal* where she reported on the development of plans, donations that had been offered, and the status of the campaign once it started. One of the first events the museum committee held was an exhibition in Anderson's department store of artifacts borrowed from various parts of the county by the historical research conveners of the WI branches. The exhibition generated considerable interest and when the owners of a small tourist home on Talbot Street saw a report on the display, they offered their house to the committee as a home for the museum. 32 Talbot had been built by Dr. Elijah Duncombe in 1848 as a home, office and apothecary where he lived until his death in 1870. The museum committee offered the owners \$10,000 for the house which was accepted prompting the opening of a fundraising campaign.

Mrs. Futcher intended that the museum would represent both the County of Elgin and the City of St. Thomas. To gather support in the city she invited to city's Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire chapters to assist with the initial fundraising drive. A mainly urban women's group formed in 1900 in Canada, the IODE had a record of supporting community initiatives such as hospitals and assisting the education of young people in a variety of ways. The IODE-WI partnership, unique perhaps in Ontario, undertook an extensive canvass of both the county and city which raised \$16,000, allowing for the purchase of the house and its complete renovation.

Among those who joined Mrs. Futcher's committee was Warren Miller, the city engineer, who as a trustee of the then moribund Elgin County Historical Society helped to direct the society's artifact collection including the Susan Paul gown to the new museum. Other community leaders came to the assistance of the museum including former STCI principal George Gray, Dr J. W. Crane as well as Dr. James D. Curtis, who assembled a medical room in the museum, and John Ker, owner of the Talbot Estate who chaired a committee which created a Talbot Room in the museum in 1960.

As the news of the museum spread descendants of many old Elgin families began to offer artifacts and documents for the permanent collection. Among the largest were gifts from the descendants of the Duncombes, the Ermatingers, and the Silcox family, founders of the community of Frome.

When it opened in 1957, the museum featured a tea room for visitors and two live-in curators, Mr. and Mrs. Murray Wilson, a retired farming couple from Vienna. The museum's hours were 2 to 5 and 7 to 9 every day including Sunday and admission was 25 cents.

Later that year, Elgin County Council voted unanimously to take over the ownership of the museum making it eligible for provincial funding. An executive committee was established made up of two members of council along with representatives from city council, the WI branches and the IODE chapters. The city and county would each provide a \$500 annual grant and the province would contribute \$600 through their new community museum programme. The balance in any given year would be met by fundraising. Council's motion establishing the museum stated that its objective was "to collect, preserve and display items relative to the history and development of the County of Elgin and the City of St. Thomas and to encourage public interest therein."

Mrs. Futcher remained museum committee chair until 1979 overseeing an addition to the museum in 1963 and the construction of an agriculture display building in 1973.

The suitability of the Duncombe House for continued use by the museum came into question after a fire in 2001 which was followed by accessibility problems leading to two temporary relocations. In 2003 a firm was retained to conduct public consultations on options for the museum's future and while it was concluded that the house was no longer a suitable location for the museum, agreement on an alternative location was not immediately forthcoming. Ultimately the one option which met all criteria, the fourth floor of the county building, was chosen. Only here could adequate exhibition and storage space be environmentally controlled at a reasonable cost. The new museum opened in its present location in fall of 2006. Today, the WI and the IODE, as members of the museum's Advisory Committee and as volunteers, continue to make an important contribution to the operation of the museum.



LOOKING BACK

<u>THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE</u>	1939	1945	<u>HOME GUARD</u>
<u>KILLED</u> GODSMAN ALEXANDER ARMY ROOT KENNETH E. - R.C.A.F. SCHLEINHAUF HOMER G. ARMY WATTEBORTH MURRAY - R.C.A.F.	<u>OVERSEAS SERVICE</u>	<u>SERVED IN CANADA</u>	BRITTON WILLIAM NEWMAN EDWARD BEN STUART ALLEN
<u>DIED AFTER RETURN TO CANADA</u> WILTON DOUGLAS - ARMY	<u>ARMY</u>	<u>ARMY</u>	<u>WOMEN'S DIVISION</u>
<u>MISSING</u> ROOT CLAYTON E. - R.C.A.F. <small>(now PRESUMED DEAD)</small>	BELL GEORGE BELL JAMES BROWN ALVIN BURY JOHN CAMPBELL GEORGE CARMICHAEL DUNCAN COCHRANE RAYMOND COWAN ROBERT DREW KENNETH E. ELLIOTT LLOYD FORMANEN WILLIAM HARDAKER DONALD E. HORNER HAROLD HUMPHRIES ARCHIE JOHNSON LYLE KNIGHT CARL LEITCH DONALD LIPPOLD GEORGE MCGILL GORDON MARR HAROLD MILLER DEMPSTER ROSS ORVAL ROSS RONALD SIMPSON RAY RICHARD WALKER CALVIN A. WILLETTS PHILIP WILTON MORLEY VAN BRANDEL JOHN SCHLEINHAUF LOUIS B.	BAIRDON RAY HAROLD BELL WILLIAM BINKS CARMEN BROWN ROY CATON GARNET COWAN JOSEPH DYMUCK DONALD HARNELL ISAAC HILL ARCHIE JACQUES DOUGLAS LIPPOLD DAVID MCGILL NORMAN MCGREGOR DUNCAN MURRAY DONALD ROSS EARL SCHLEINHAUF GLEN H. SCHLEINHAUF LOUIS B. SCHLEINHAUF OTTO SCHLEINHAUF RICHARD SCHLEINHAUF WILLIAM SCOTT MALCOLM SMITH GORDON SMITH ROY SUTTON GEORGE WILTON JOSEPH ROSS GLEN M'RAE GLEN CATON HOWARD DREW FRANK HENDERSON GEORGE MURRAY MAX SHELLER LYLE TIMSON GEORGE	<u>OVERSEAS SERVICE</u>
	<u>NAVY</u>	<u>NAVY</u>	<u>ARMY</u>
	DAVIES FRED EVANS JOHN R. LEITH DONALD M'INTYRE GORDON NEWMAN DOUGLAS WEISS JOSEPH	DREW FRANK HENDERSON GEORGE MURRAY MAX SHELLER LYLE TIMSON GEORGE	M'RAE ALICE V.
	<u>R.C.A.F.</u>	<u>R.C.A.F.</u>	<u>SERVICE IN CANADA</u>
	BINKS HUBB BURY VINCENT GAMMON HARLEY ROSS J. ALLAN SWARTZ REGINALD DFC. WATTEBORTH DOUGLAS WILTON ORVILLE	BINKS JAMES DAVIES RICHARD HUMPHRIES PATRICK HUMPHRIES DANIEL JACQUES MURRAY NEWMAN WILLIAM PARTRIDGE ARCHIE ROOT GORDON	<u>ARMY</u>
			MATECHETT MARGARET MARY
			ROCK BETTY
			MARTIN MABEL PATRICK
			<u>R.C.A.F.</u>
			SCHLEINHAUF M. BERYL

LOOKING BACK

Dear Mary:

April 21, 2006

The recent fire has removed some of our mementos from the village complex.

In 2004, I was doing some research on one of the families who had members who served as a volunteer. A photo provides the best evidence for such work.

This item has been recorded in my files and may be of use in restoring the plaque - whenever the reconstruction is completed.

Please, place this item on the agenda of your next meeting of the Women's Institute.

It should be in a place of honour for all to see!

Bob

The following pages were donated to Mary Lippold, her husband George was a veteran in World War II, by Bob Hill for our Tweedsmuir. Thankfully the plaque was not destroyed in the fire and hangs in the entrance at the West Lorne Complex.

LOOKING BACK



DONATED BY BOB HILL

Western Elgin LOOKING BACK



Royal Theatre opened 1946 to 1962, now Foodland in West Lorne

— Photo courtesy of Harley Lashbrook Mercury-Sun Publications

Telephones connect small towns

In the early days of West Lorne the telephone office was in Harvey Brother's drug store. In 1907 J.M. Kelly became the new local manager when he bought out the Harvey Brother's stock and business. From there in 1911 J.M. Kelly resigned and Lloyd Brown became the manager and the switchboard was moved to his store. After that in 1928 his office was moved again which at this time it was on Graham St.



Mabel Gammon telephone operator in West Lorne

— Photo courtesy of Harley Lashbrook Mercury-Sun Publications

On May 1913 24 hour service came into effect in West Lorne. However the telephone operators would shut down on Sundays allowing staff members to attend church. However in 1914 a petition was sent out pointing out that the telephone service was being shut down Sundays from 10am to 2pm, and 5pm to 8 30pm. As a result in early 1915 shutting down the telephone service at all became discontinued.

As technology kept improving so did the telephone. A new era in West Lorne's telephone history began. In March of 1948, the office was converted from Magneto to common battery service. As a result more than 250 subscribers would be able to forget about cranking the phone in order to receive the operator.

Now when the caller would use the telephone instead of a "number please" it was a dial tone. The first local call over the new system was made by the manager of the Bank of Montreal, William Bell.

The telephone was a private affair in

Dutton before going public. As early as 1883 Fred Humpidge had a telephone connecting his office with his factory. In 1891 the first telephone line was built in the village; it was a long distance line that ran from St. Thomas to Ridgeway passing through Fingal, Shedden, Dutton, West Lorne, Rodney and Highgate. In 1904 the village approved poles for installation of telephone service to village residents.

There were three telephone services: The Dutton and Dunwich Telephone Company, The Wallacetown and Lakeshore Telephone Company and the Dunwich and Southwold Telephone Association. On December 6 1964, dial service was established.

In the year 1983, direct distance dialing came to customers of Dutton.

Then and now, long ago

INTERESTING FACTS: WEST LORNE

- First automobile in West Lorne was owned by Archibald McKillop.
- January 25th 1896, John Chasely born in England in 1864 became West Lorne's first Librarian
- West Lorne's first and only cheese factory began in 1907.

West Lorne Moments

1903- November 12th 1903 the Merchants Bank of Canada formed a branch in West Lorne. When the bank opened the population of West Lorne was 400.

Oct. 21 1946 – Royal Theater officially opened its doors, for 25 cents you could see a full length feature, the news of the day, a cartoon, a preview of the next attraction and popcorn.

1949- Arena opened in February, accommodating 2000 people twice the population of the village.

April 1962 – Royal Theater closed, IGA grocery store opened where BJ's Variety is with a number of people allowed in store depending on the number of carts.

June 9th 1968 – early in the morning the fire alarm sounded after flames were seen coming from the arena.

1975 – Krebsz Jewelry owned by Konrad and Rosalie was opened

June 1987 – Tim Hortons & Wendys restaurants held their official opening after a bus load of company officials and other invited guests arrived from London.

The Chronicle Scrapbook



SUBMITTED

A look at the skating carnival 54 years ago

Yvonne Jewell submitted this photo to The Chronicle. This photo was taken after the Skating Carnival in 1954. Left to Right: Marie Cairns, Gloria Neil, Gloria De Graw, Jane Attridge, Vera Reid, Connie Locker, Joyce Wilson, Yvonne Pisley, Lois McKillop, Elaine Buttenger, Nellie Attridge. Absent: Agnes Norris



LOOKING BACK

1 9 4 5

SERVED IN CANADA

A R M Y

Balsdon, Rev. Harold
Binks, Carman
Caton, Garnet

Dymock, Donald
Hill, Archie
Lippold, David

McGregor, Duncan
Ross, Earl
Schleihauf, Louis B.

Schleihauf, Richard
Scott, Malcolm
Smith, Roy

Wilton, Joseph
McRae, Glen

Bell, William
Brown, Roy
Cowan, Joseph

Haskell, Isaac
Jacques, Douglas
McGill, Norman

Murray, Donald
Schleihauf, Glen H.
Schleihauf, Otto

Schleihauf, William
Smith, Gordon
Sutton, George

Ross, Glenn

LOOKING BACK

1 9 4 5

SERVED IN CANADA

NAVY

Caton, Howard
Drew, Frank
Henderson, George

Murray, Max
Sheeler, Lyle
Timson, George

R. C. A. F.

Binks, James
Davies, Richard
Humphries, Arthur
Humphries, Daniel

Jacques, Murray
Newman, William
Partridge, Archie
Root, Gordon

LOOKING BACK

1 9 3 9

OVERSEAS SERVICE ARMY

Bell, George

Brown, Alvin

Campbell, George

Cochrane, Raymond

Drew, Kenneth E.

Formanek, William

Horner, Harry

Johnson, Lyle

Leitch, Donald

McGill, Gordon

Miller, Dempster

Ross, Ronald

Walker, Calvin A

Wilton, Morley

Schleihauf, Louis B

Bell, James

Bury, John

Carmichael, Duncan

Cowan, Robert

Elliott, Lloyd

Hardaker, Donald E.

Humpheries, Archie

Knight Carl

Lippold, George

Marr, Harold

Ross, Orval

Simpson, Rev. Richard

Willetts, Philip

Van Brakel, John

LOOKING BACK

1 9 3 9

OVERSEAS SERVICE

NAVY

Davis, Fred
Evans, John R.
Leith, Donald
McIntyre, Gordon
Newman, Douglas
Weiss, Joseph

R. C. A. F.

Binks, Hugh
Bury, Vincent
Gammon, Harley
Ross, J. Allen
*Swartz, Reginald **
Watterworth, Douglas
Wilton, Orval

LOOKING BACK

1 9 4 5
SERVED IN CANADA
HOME GUARD

Britton, William
Newman, Edward (BEM)
Stuart, Allan

WOMEN'S DIVISION
OVERSEAS SERVICE

A R M Y

Meek, Alice, V.

SERVICE IN CANADA

A R M Y

Matchett, Margaret Murray
Roach, Betty
Martin, Mabel Pethrick

R. C. A. F.

Schleihauf, M. Beryl

(Collective List From 1939)

THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

KILLED IN BATTLE

Godsman, Alexander (Army)
Root, Kenneth E. (RCAF)
Schleihauf, Homer G. (Army)
Watterworth, Malcolm W. (RCAF)

DIED AFTER RETURNING TO CANADA

Wilton, Douglas (Navy)

MISSING

Root, Clayton E. (RCAF)
(Presumed Dead)