

Preparing a farm or home history

Marilyn Snedden, Curator for Eastern Ontario Area Women's Institutes, recently conducted local workshops for WI members, teaching them how to begin a history of their farm or home. She is also interested in encouraging women to write personal histories. She notes historians find it difficult to know the day-to-day life of women of the past and unless women start documenting that now, future historians will not know the life of the 20th century woman.

The following is some information she passed on at her workshops. If you would like more details, contact Marilyn at R. R. #3, Almonte, KOA 1A0.

The local Registry Office is the best place to start because every original 100 acre lot has its own page, listing all the land transactions over the years on that lot. Each Bill of Sale has its number which can be used to request that document. Many early wills in Registry Offices given much information on families on that land.

The other main source to start a farm history should be older family members or neighbors who remember

stories of earlier days on the land. Tape recording their story is important, as long as the person is comfortable with the idea.

Other sources to check, before doing a lot of personal research are historical societies, genealogical societies, libraries, college and university libraries, newspapers, church records and municipal records.

After the bits and pieces have been filed in a three-ring binder in an orderly fashion, one can write to the Ontario Archives for further help. Five the Lot, Concession and Township location as well as the names of early settlers on your property. Ask for a photocopy of the information they have on file in the Township Papers on this lot. If there is more than six pages, you will be charged a nominal sum for copies. The Ontario Public Archives are at 77 Grenville St., Toronto, M7A 2R9.

The other main source is the National Archives in Ottawa which is best visited in person to do research. A visit to the genealogist there, with

a clearly documented list of clues for the first settlers on the farm will result in getting the best advice on where to start in this huge research facility.

Another way to do research at the National Archives is through inter-library loan. Any library that has a microfilm reader can order any microfilm from the National Archives to read locally. You should have the number of the film but if you give the township, county and year of the census you require, the Archives will send it to the library.

Careful use of photos and old papers cannot be emphasized enough. Scotch tape, paper clips and ball point pens have damaged a lot of old pictures and clippings over the years. Museums have sources of acid-free boxes to hold valuable papers.

The plastic envelope-type photo albums are much superior to the gum-backed pages that either stick to the back of the picture, tearing it when removed, or don't keep the pictures in place at all.

Information on families who lived on the farm should be included in your farm history since people are an important part of any farm.

