

The Family and The Home

Headed among the lovely groves on Ridge Road is the beautiful white frame house which was the home of the Lee family for six generations.

James Lee, of British scotch lineage, built a log cabin on this site when he, his wife, Martha, and his family arrived with the United Empire Loyalists from Maryland in 1762. He brought some furnishings and flowering plants with him and several of these can still be found on the premises. The old stage gate on the property and built some of the barns, one specific piece in the present kitchen being a seven foot china cupboard made with wooden pegs instead of nails. James Lee was accidentally killed by an axe flying from the handle at the ceiling of the first frame house built in Safford Township. They had two sons and three daughters.

John, eldest son of James Lee, and Mary Lee were presented with the Crown Grant on their wedding day in 1801. It was John who built the back part of the frame house in the same year. This part forms the nucleus of the apartment at the back of the present house. John Lee served with the 100th Lincoln Regiment in the War of 1812. John and Mary had eleven children. He died in 1875.

Alvan, youngest son of John Lee, planned the present house at the top of the mountain on "Edgemont Farm" in 1860 and the front part was built in the "old house" in 1873. The present white house and better known as of Gothic architecture. It has green shutters, two bay windows and hand carved maple verge boards running along the gables. These were made by a fourteen year old carpenter's apprentice, name Henry. His original pattern resembles a paper chair of maple leaves, and the job took him a whole summer to complete. Alvan had married Jennie Fox in 1855. Edward was one of their three children.

Edward (now fourth generation) inherited the family farm. He was born May 3, 1868 and died June 29, 1926. Edward married Janet Richardson Chubbuck born Jan. 4, 1862, died 1963. They had five children - Marjorie, Gladis, Corbin, Frank and Alice.

Edward became a school teacher. In 1890 he received a Certificate in Agriculture given by the Agricultural and Arts Association of Ontario. He was a charter member of the Farmer's Institute and secretary for sixteen years, Safford Agricultural Society secretary-treasurer for a number of years, and Safford Township clerk for nearly twenty years.

Edward was a prominent, public spirited, broadminded farmer and cultivator of his interests in mixed farming with purebred Jersey cattle, Jersey Dairy huffer, maple syrup and fruit.

Mrs. Janet Lee was a teacher also. She was chosen by the city of Hamilton to take a special course in Toronto. In return to Hamilton to help set up a kindergarten system for the city. She retired to nearby Island in 1899.

It was through the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Lee and Adelaide Richardson that the first Women's Institute in the world was formed. It was in the winter during winter 1893 that the original constitution was first passed by Mrs. Lee, under the supervision of Colonel F.W. Carpenter and Senator E.D. Smith.

Mrs. Lee became one of the first directors of the Ontario Women's Institute, and it was she who suggested that the annual fee be 25¢ per member in order that all women could join. Mr. E.D. Smith was the first President.

Frank (10th generation) was the younger son of Edward and married from a bad heart, the aftermath of polio. However he was accepted and served overseas in the Army Service Corps, as a Red Cross Driver in England and later in France. When he returned from the war, Frank returned on the farm. In 1922 he married Katherine Isabel Matheson. They had four daughters. Frank died in 1948 and Kate in 1971.

On May 29, 1967 a memorial plaque on a rugged granite boulder in front of the Lee Home was unveiled. Through the efforts of the Faded Women's Institute of Ontario an historic plaque was unveiled and dedicated at the Edward Lee Home by the Ontario Women's Board of Ontario on October 1, 1967.

For many years I had been the hope of the Ontario Women's Institute that the Lee Home could be purchased, and in 1968 a recommendation was presented to the Faded Women's Institute of Ontario Board meeting from the Districts of Westmorland South and Westmorland North.

An option was taken by the Provincial Board of F.W.I.O. in October 1967 on the property on Lot 17, Concession 8, of the Township of Safford, south side of Ridge Road, in Westmorland County. On June 15, 1972 the Edward Lee Home was officially purchased.

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John Lee University
Lawyer
1875-1876

1980-87 Mrs. Deborah (Dorothy) Lee Secretary-Treasurer 118 Taylor St.
1988-99 Mrs. Eleanor Lee
Mrs. Eleanor Lee, Whitby, Ontario Mrs. Nell Hollands, Mrs. J.L. MacLennan
President with F.W.I.O. subject. 1111-1112 Lakeside, 118 Taylor St.