

BULGER'S GENERAL STORE

Taken from The Eganville Leader, September 24, 1986: An Eganville area store that is almost as old as Canada itself is closing its doors in the near future for the last time. It's Bulger's General Store at Bulger's Corners, situated in Bromley township on what is known as the District Line, the line that separates Bromley and Wilberforce townships.

For more than a century, the log building along what is now known as County Road 5, has been a general store. In recent years, it has become something of a museum. Along with goods one would expect to find in a country store -- boots and butter, pins and fish hooks and pop and work pants -- there remains some left-overs from years gone by. And they paint a tabloid of the passing decades.

From the late 1800's, there's a "computing scale," little similar to the buzzing, beeping computers of today, but at the forefront of technology of its time. A special balancing mechanism allows the scale to be set to zero with a bag or box in place, ready to be filled with candy or flour. That improved efficiency, allowing a correct weight without weighing the container separately and subtracting its weight from the weight of the goods it contained.

The "computing" portion of the scale consists of a chart at the top, comparing price to weight and providing a total. That was a time-saver too.

A cold drink dispenser from which ice-cold drinks --orange, lemon or grape -- were sold by the glass is still in existence. This was used in the days long before soft drinks were sold by the bottle or can.

From the early 1900's, there are boots and shoes for women and children. Back then, footwear came in one colour -- black. Women's boots laced up high or were buttoned. And a handsome pair of children's shoes sold for 20 cents.

A poster, circa 1927, depicts a simpler age when all Coke was classic, although no one knew that at the time. Another advised customers to "say Player's please," and the poster itself is now a classic.

The store was established by Michael, a son of Daniel and Ellen Bulger. Daniel, who was born in Ireland on March 1, 1819 at or near Nairn, what is now Offaly County, emigrated to Canada in the early 1840's. He was married to Ellen Sheahan of Ramsay township in February, 1846. They settled in Wilberforce township on a farm which is now owned and occupied by Wilfred and Gladys Howard, just across the road and a little to the west of the general store.

Other settlers moved into the district and a short time later the community was named Bulger's Corners. Michael Bulger was one of a family of 13 children, three of whom died in infancy.

"As far as we can determine, the business began in 1880," said Carmelita Bulger, who has operated the store for the past 26 years.

The building in which Michael set up business is even older than that. Prior to it becoming Bulger's Store, it had been a blacksmith shop, owned and operated by Timothy Gorman.

"I don't know how old the building is," said Miss Bulger, "but my mother told me that when she was a little girl she used to stop on the way home from school to watch the blacksmith at work."

However, her brother, Lornie is of the opinion that the original blacksmith shop may have been torn down and replaced with a new 1 1/2 storey building on the same site, or else the original building was enlarged and added to in its present form.

At the same time, or shortly afterwards, a warehouse was added to the rear of the main building, which more than doubled the area. Lornie thinks that this may have happened because of the size and height of the building and because there is a full basement under the main building and under half of the warehouse. The basement walls and the rest of the foundation are stone and masonry and are over two feet thick. On the same property, there was a log house, part of which may have served as a store while the present building was being constructed or renovated.

Lornie remembers seeing a number of articles in this building that could only have been used in a store. He also recalls parts of farm machinery and even some new and used