

Last of vanishing trade

Sir Ernest McMillan fiddled where horses were once shod

One of the top 12 Centennial essays by grades 7 and 8 of Rockwood public school is this one by Carolyn Law.

This story is about the history of the blacksmith shop that stands on the corner of 24 Highway and the seventh concession of Eramosa. It tells about its owners, the dates it was erected and changed hands, some of the different things of which the trade consisted. It was the last operating blacksmith business in Eramosa.

THE LAST OF A VANISHING TRADE

By Carolyn Law

"Under the spreading chestnut tree,

The village smithy stands."

The blacksmith shop that stands on the corner of 24 Highway and the seventh concession of Eramosa, once belonged to my great grandfather. It still stands today.

The original buildings were built in 1874 by William Abbott, who purchased the half acre from James Talbot. The buildings consist of a blacksmith shop, house and barn.

Mr. Abbott operated it as a blacksmith shop for 10 years until he sold it to Henry Moon in 1884. Mr. Moon did not keep it long, selling it again in 1885 to Alfred Howse.

Still operating as a blacksmith shop, Mr. Howse sold it to Benjamin Hosking in 1893. Mr. Hosking came from Devonshire, England, to Montreal where he worked as a blacksmith, building wagons for a large firm. He married a girl from Montreal and they came to the Eramosa area. Here he purchased the blacksmith shop, which he operated for six years. He planted a cedar hedge in front of the property in 1895 and it stood until 1958, when the Highway had it removed.

In 1899, Mr. Hosking sold it to Josiah S. Bruce and retired to a farm near Guelph. Mr. Bruce only kept it until 1901, when Irwine Tovell bought it. Mr. Tovell was a farmer and rented the building to my great grandfather, William Smith, who purchased it from Mr. Tovell in 1903.

William Smith and Jane McCutcheon were married on Christmas Day, December 25, 1900. He was a blacksmith and worked for John Murdoch at Marden for a year before coming to Eramosa. They had four children, Sadie, Mrs. Fred Bappte, Guelph; Percy, deceased; Pearl, Mrs. Alvin Miller, Brampton and Vera, Mrs. Earl Van Norman, Acton.

All were born at Eramosa and attended S.S. No. 7 School, Eramosa, under the direction of the late Mrs. Brough, nee Janet Mitchell.

In the early Nineteen Hundreds, it was a flourishing blacksmith and woodwork shop, with horses tied outside as early as six o'clock in the morning.

But three years after Mr. Smith bought it, disaster struck on May 24, 1906; the blacksmith shop was burned to the ground. The fire was believed to have been started by boys playing with firecrackers. It was immediately rebuilt and work went on again in its usual manner.

The general store that sat on the opposite corner was purchased by Mr. Smith from Joe Stewart in 1910. Moved across the road and attached to the back of the blacksmith shop, where it was used as a dance hall for about five years.

Here Ernest McMillan played the fiddle and later went on to renown fame as a musician with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, where he was bestowed the honor of Sir Ernest McMillan.

The building was then used as the woodworking part of the blacksmith shop. Here they sanded, varnished, painted and repaired buggies and surreys, made wagons, wheelbarrows, wheels, axe and hammer handles and repaired all kinds of farm tools.

In 1917 at the early age of 13, his son Percy joined him and shod his first horse. Percy remained with his father, learning the blacksmith trade until 1926, when he went to Toronto to take up auto mechanics.

How I wish I could have been born 20 years sooner, so I could have sat in one of those buggies or surreys. Pretending to be some fine lady in long skirts and hoops, with a frilly bonnet or parasol, driving a matched team, or a dark spirited pony.

Or maybe I could have peddled that old grindstone; the one they sharpened the axes and tools on. It worked very much like a bicycle, only you do not go anywhere on this, you just turn a large wheel of stone that sat in front of you. Before cars, they had to pour a pail of water over it, to keep it wet, but later my great grandfather had half a rubber tire for a trough, which was placed under the wheel of stone and filled with water. Now the stone would be always wet, whenever he wanted it.

I would like to have seen the forge lit, with its bright coals and have seen that red hot horseshoe as it was pulled by long tongs from the fire. All glowing, what a sizzling, hissing noise it must have made as it was plunged deep in the barrel of cold water. Or hear the anvil ring, when the smithy hit the shoe to shape it to fit the horse. For horses, like people, do not all wear the same size of shoes. How the sparks flew as steel hit steel under the hammer's blow.

When his son Percy returned from Toronto in the spring of 1928, he used the woodworking shop to repair cars. Here he built two small racing cars, which he used for his own pleasure. He had a booth built in front of the blacksmith shop and gas pumps



Still standing, historic blacksmith shop at corner of Concession 7 and 24 Highway.

Just to smell the odor of the hot horseshoe placed against the horse's hoof would have likely sent me outdoors for some fresh air. Watching the nails driven in on just the right angles as to penetrate the hoof and come out the side, where the sharp nails were snipped off and filed smooth. I have been assured this was painless.

I will have to agree, I guess as Mr. Smith never suffered any serious injuries at the feet of the four-legged friends, even when holding a foot between his two knees.

I also missed all the horse-shoe pitching tournaments that went on, while the men waited for their horses to be shod.

But all the trouble was not over for Mr. Smith. In June, 1925, a cyclone swept through the back yard, tearing all the shingles from the roof of the house, removing the front porch and damaging the back woodshed. The barn was a complete loss.

Mr. Smith then purchased the lower half acre of property joining his from Dave McMillan for \$75. With the help of neighbors and friends, even the local minister Bernard Kock, the house was repaired and the barn rebuilt that summer. However, the barn now occupied a spot on the land just obtained from Mr. McMillan.

When his son Percy returned from Toronto in the spring of 1928, he used the woodworking shop to repair cars. Here he built two small racing cars, which he used for his own pleasure. He had a booth built in front of the blacksmith shop and gas pumps

were installed. The booth was built by two local carpenters, Wilbur McCutcheon and Clarence Petty, under the direction of George Mack.

Despite all these new arrangements, the blacksmithing business went on the same.

After nine years, Percy built a new garage across the road. The booth was sold to Lorne and Orville Duffield on the next concession, who used it as a brooder house. All returned to normal on the blacksmith side of the road. Here Mr. Smith carried on his business as a smithy until shortly before his death in April, 1953. He was the last practising smith in Eramosa Township.

The property was in the Smith name for 60 years, being purchased in 1903 and sold in 1963 to its present-day owners, Mr. and Mrs. John Hamilton.

I passed last eve beside the blacksmith's door, and heard the anvil ring the vesper's chime; and looking in, I saw upon the floor, Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had?" said I.

"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"

"Just one," he answered. Then with twinkling eye,

"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word,

For ages, sceptic's blows have beat upon

But though the noise of falling blows was heard,

The anvil is unharmed — the hammer's gone.

—by John Clifford.

Teachers from Indian school at Home and School meeting

By Mrs. Frank Taylor

Rockwood — The program convener, Mrs. Joy Law introduced the guests for the evening at the Rockwood Home and School meeting held in the town hall.

The couple, Mr. and Mrs. Steinman of New Hamburg, had spent a period of time working as members of a Gospel Mission among the Indians of Poplar Hill in north-western Ontario. Mrs. Steinman gave a most interesting review of their work as teachers in the 52 pupil boarding school. Academic courses were given and Mr. Steinman specialized in teaching the boys carpentering and mechanics. The girls had special classes in sewing, cooking and many phases of home economics. Many beautiful and informative slides were shown by Mr. Steinman.

Mrs. S. Drijber thanked the couple for a fine educational and enjoyable evening.

Centennial essay winners in grades 5 and 6, and art and craft winners from grades 1 to 4, received their centennial medallions. The president, Mrs. Elwood Tosh, called on Mrs. F. Taylor to make the presentations to the essay winners.

Mrs. Taylor had made the final judging of the essays and expressed her congratulations to each competitor. Awards went to: Sherrie Guld, Stephen Jones, Gordon Tosh, Marie Ellen Saunders, Charles McCrae and Don Buttenham. Mrs. Tosh presented the art and craft awards to: Susan Millison, Lindsey Jones, Trudy Smith, Philip Drijber, Kim Anderson, Ian Pasmore, Robert Wood and Ann Wickham.

The meeting closed with the Home and School prayer.

A variety of bead work done by hand by the Indian women was on display and for sale to help these women develop

their art. It was all beautifully done and most interesting. A lovely lunch was served by the social committee during the social time following.

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OSPRINGE

Wear costumes at centennial euchre pupils sell baking for Expo funds

By Mrs. D. G. Robertson

A gala night was held Friday, at the school, when the Women's Institute sponsored a Centennial euchre, to close the present season.

A number of ladies were in Centennial dress and a few gentlemen also came attired in appropriate dress, including some handsome (?) beards.

Thirty tables of euchre were played, prizes being awarded for ladies first Mrs. S. Mattheus; second Mrs. Roy Young; men's first Mr. Bert Price; second Mrs. N. White, playing a white card.

Following lunch lucky draws were made for prizes donated by local businesses: box of chocolates, Howard Switzer; bag of fertilizer, Mrs. Barnstable; veterinary medicine, Mrs. F. McCutcheon; roast of beef, Mr. Harold Reid; car wax, Mrs. Till; shampoo and set, T. D. McCutcheon; grocery voucher, Walter Binnie.

The senior school pupils had a bake table in conjunction with the euchre, and a good sum was realized, to be used towards travelling expenses to Expo.

Mrs. Stuart McKinnon, chairman of Erin Cancer Society,

was a guest of the Guelph Student Nurses on an all-day bus tour, when they visited the Bryon Institute for Mentally Retarded children and the Cancer hospital in London.

Mrs. M. Jackson's recent visitors included Mrs. Nellie Bell, Mrs. Murray Millson and family, Mr. Roy Hindley, all of Guelph; Mrs. Etta Barden, Eden Mills; Mr. and Mrs. Oswald Meadows, Rockwood; Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Fisher, Erin; Mr. and Mrs. George Cruickshank, Miss Gertrude

Watson, Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Watson of Hillsburgh.

Mrs. William Wragg is now convalescing at her home following surgery in a Toronto hospital.

Mrs. H. Sayers of Acton and Garnet Bruce of Toronto visited at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ward Bruce on Sunday.

Mrs. Gordon Aitken was able to return to her teaching duties at Erin school, on Monday, following several weeks' absence, due to strained back and hip muscles.

Mrs. Gordon Snyder has been a patient in Guelph hospital, this past week.

Guests at the home of D. G. and Mrs. Robertson during the weekend included Miss B. Axelrod R.N., Galt; Mrs. Colleen Leis, R.N., Guelph; Mr. and Mrs. Reg. Carter, Stratford; Mrs. C. Heimler, Mrs. D. Robertson, Miss M. McIvor of Guelph and Mr. and Mrs. George Young and Marilyn of Acton.

Mrs. H. Pankratz was hostess for the meeting of the Ladies' Aid. The president, Mrs. R. McEwan presided and also had the devotional, "More than one form of thine"; Mrs. B. Clarke read the minutes and correspondence. Items of business were discussed, among them being the

Cooking School by Ontario Hydro to be held shortly.

Mrs. G. Jackson and Mrs. E. Fisher assisted the hostess in serving refreshments.

Grace Mitchell honored at shower

Rockwood — Miss Grace Mitchell was guest of honor at a miscellaneous shower held by her friends in the S.S. No. 3 Community Centre recently. A most enjoyable evening followed with Grace receiving many beautiful gifts. She replied to their best wishes, thanking everyone and extending an invitation to their future home.

Lunch was served to the group by Sharon Smith, Jean Bayne and Joan Ramsden.

MOTHER'S DAY MAY 14

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