

Local family farm spans a century

by Chris Mackey
The Elmvale area is rich in history, and many of the original settlers' homes have passed into the hands of non-family members. But a few people still hang on to their ancestors' homesteads, and the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Strath of RR 3 Elmvale is one which falls into this category.

A complete family history, painstakingly compiled by Mrs. Mary (Strath) Johnston, provides a look into the bygone days when a group of Scottish immigrants, intent on settling in the area, dealt with land agents, wild predators and nature's fury, to carve out a homestead that was to remain in the family 125 years.

In the beginning
It all began in 1855 when 27 year-old George Strath from a family of tenant farmers in

Fyvie, Scotland, decided to risk all by immigrating to Canada. On arrival, he approached the local land agent to secure property for a farm and managed to purchase 100 acres from his meager finances.

He specified his preference for a portion of land containing as few stones as possible and accompanied the land agent on a tour of the acreage before signing the deed. Unfortunately though, once cleared, the property was found to contain quite a few stones and rocks.

The couple constructed their home on a part of the property within easy reach of fresh water and approximately eight miles from the nearest town of Hillsdale. Their primitive log home was close to the Old Penetang Road (highway 93), their only access to the markets at

Penetang. It was there that they went to trade eggs and butter for necessary supplies until land could be cleared for planting.

Money was scarce, having been spent on the purchase of the farm and the few cows, chickens and sheep needed, so as a means of raising funds, trips were made by foot in summer, to Scarborough, where jobs could be had haying and harvesting.

Slowly the land was cleared. Trees were cut, brush was burnt and stumps were pulled, a slow and tedious job at the best of times.

A partnership
A year after George settled in the new land his brother Alexander arrived from Scotland with his new bride and mother. The couple built their log home on the property and the two brothers worked on the farm.

In 1862 Alexander

purchased half-interest in the holdings and the men became partners in the farming operation. It was at this time that the farmers approached the land agent for 50 additional acres of land. A price of \$550 was paid at that time.

The Strath farm passed into the hands of Alexander completely in 1880 when George decided to re-locate his family to Sioux Michigan. Alexander and his wife purchased the brother's share, and along with their four boys and five girls,

continued to run the farm.

Alexander and his wife were requested to raise their son, John's boy James, and James lived and worked on the farm with his grandfather from then on.

In 1907 the 23 year-old grandson purchased the farm from his grandfather and a new barn was raised nine years later. James worked the land for many years after that.

Changes
Gordon Strath, born in 1910, married Ellen

(Palmer) Strath in 1938 and the couple had one son David and three daughters Barb, Ruth and Betty. The couple lived in the brick farmhouse built by James near the 11th concession, and Jim and his wife moved into a cottage near the main house.

In 1964 Gordon constructed an apartment in his home, and Jim moved into it. According to the family Jim

was 'one of the finest people you would ever want to know' and the group lived very happily together.

Jim passed away in 1971, pre-deceased by his wife, and a new farmhouse was constructed for the Strath family four years later. Gordon now works 50 acres of land as the

• Continued on page 26



Historic family

Ellen and Gordon Strath are the last of a long line of family members living on the 125 year-old farm near Elmvale established in 1855. Seen here with them are the Century

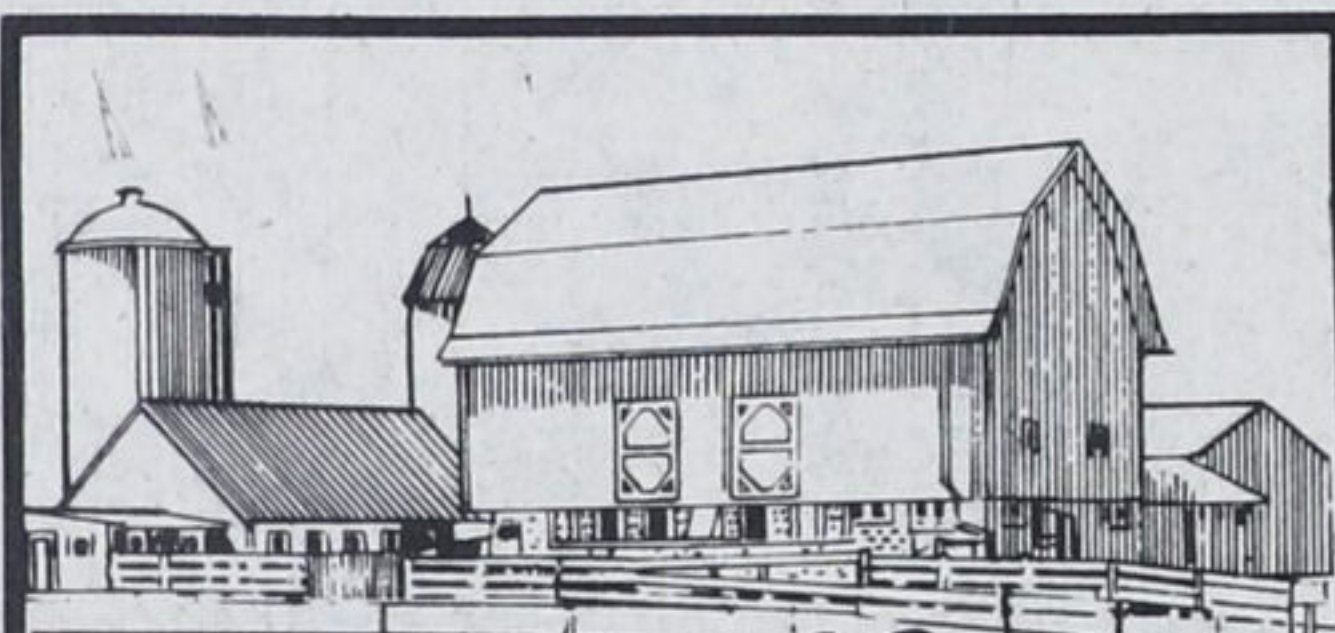
Plaque given to them by the North Simcoe Junior Farmers denoting the fact the farm has been in the hands of the same family for 100 years, as well as one of their 14 grandchildren.

Junior farmers to compete in Guelph

GUELPH — More than 400 Junior Farmers from across Ontario will compete in the Junior Farmer Provincial Summer Games at Guelph, August 9.

Each team or individual competitor in the summer games qualifies by winning competitions at the county or district level, and at the zone level. There are seven zones in the province.

One of the highlights of the 1980 games is the obstacle course, a new event this year. Soccer has also been added to the list of activities



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