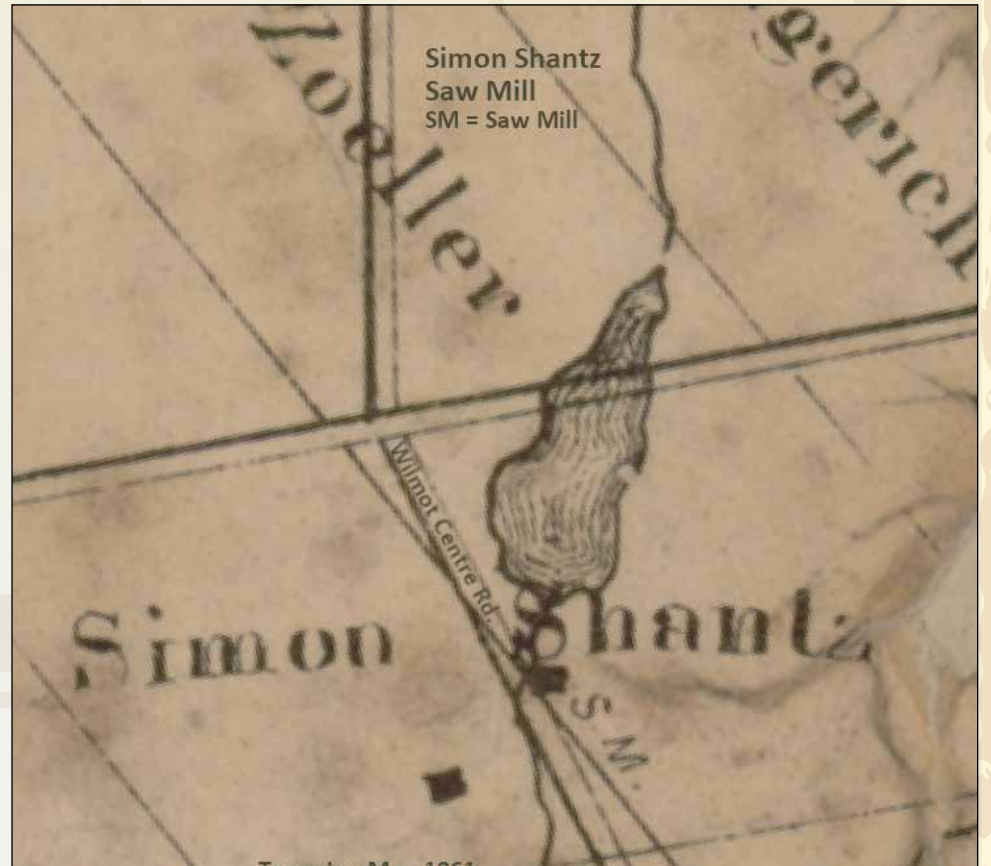




2023 HERITAGE EDITION



Early Saw Mills on Plum Creek in Wilmot Township



By Al Junker

Sawmills were one of the first industries established by early settlers. There were several reasons for this, one is the fact that large trees needed to be cleared in order to plant crops. Establishing a saw mill to cut these logs into lumber provided a source of income and enabled the farmer to get rid of the logs they had just cleared. Saw mills were fairly simple to construct, often by the farmer with assistance from a local blacksmith who manufactured the basic machinery needed. A stream dammed to create a pond provided the power needed to run the saw mill. Several small streams in Wilmot were utilized. One such stream was Plum Creek which starts south of Baden and empties into the Nith River south of Haysville, just past the location of Holiday Beach Trailer Camp.

Today, Plum Creek is a small stream of water, but in the 1860s, it was dammed in several places and provided power for six or possibly seven saw mills. The creek consists of several tributaries, three of which had saw mills. The earliest mill appears to have been established in 1836 by Joseph and Christian Nafziger. It was located on Lot 12, north of Bleams Road, across from Wilmot Centre Church. It has frequently been referred to as Meisel's dam or mill. In 1850, the mill was taken over by Georg Jutzi and was later operated by Joseph Jutzi.

The decade of the 1840s had several saw mills commence operations on Plum Creek. Smith's Canadian Gazetteer published in 1846 listed nine saw mills in Wilmot Township. A large stand of trees known as the Wilmot Pinery was located along the Huron Road near present day

Pinehill. The trees in the Pinery consisted of pine and oak, many of which were four feet in diameter. The area attracted the interest of Jacob Shantz who had settled in Waterloo Township in 1810. In 1830, he opened a saw mill in Waterloo Township. Between 1836 and 1847, he purchased three 200 acre lots on the south side of the Huron Road between Haysville and Pinehill. The first settler in the Wilmot Pinery was Jacob's son Joseph Y. Shantz who arrived in 1840. In 1843, Joseph started a saw mill on his land, Lot 16, Concession 2, Block A. The magnificent trees were cleared, sawed into lumber, sold and then used to erect buildings in south Wilmot. The saw mill operated into the 1880s.

In 1840, John K. Hamacher built a mill at Lot 12 south of Bleams Road. It was located across from the Nafziger saw mill on a tributary of Plum Creek. The mill was powered by a water turbine known as the "Little Giant." It utilized an up and down saw to cut the logs rather than the more common circular saw. It was believed to be the last water powered mill operating in Waterloo County in 1918. In its later years it served as a chopping mill. It was dismantled in 1920. Remnants of the mill pond remain today beside Wilmot Centre Church. A photo of the mill can be found in Lorraine Roth's book, *The Amish and Their Neighbours: The German Block, Wilmot Township 1822-1860*.

In 1842, Eli Stauffer began a saw mill north of the Huron Road, upstream from Joseph Y. Shantz's mill. It seems that it may be the mill which was later operated by Simon Shantz. This mill, like the Hamacher mill, utilized an up and down saw. In addition to cutting lumber, shingles were also produced. Later it served

as a chopping mill. Subsequent owners of the mill were John Bingeman, Ephraim Shantz and Manasseh Cressman. Apparently, the dam broke away during Cressman's ownership. This mill was located along Wilmot Centre Road across from Lo Lynd Farms (the Habel family.)

Another mill appears to have been situated south of the Simon Shantz mill. It was established in 1842 by Mr. Horn Stevens or Stephens. At some point, the mill was taken over by William Puddicombe. The 1851 Census of Canada lists Puddicombe as the owner of a sawmill valued at 150 and producing 200,000 feet of lumber. The exact location is not given. William Puddicombe had extensive land holdings in the Haysville area along the course of Plum Creek, including the land where Holiday Beach Trailer Camp is located today. There does not appear to be any reference to this mill in the 1861 Census.

Around 1848, Jacob Ratz established a saw mill on Lot 12, Concession 1, Block A. It was situated on a third tributary of Plum Creek. Since the flow of water here could not produce sufficient power, the mill was converted to a steam saw mill, and the water from the stream supplied the boiler. The mill was located on Sandhills Road at the dip between Huron Road and Witmer Road. This area was referred to as "Possum Hollow." Valentine Ratz was born on this farm and later served as the MP for the riding of North Middlesex and later was appointed to the Senate by Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

A second saw mill on this tributary was started by Jacob Becker. This mill was located on Lot 14, Concession 1, Block A, across the road from the Pinehill School. Becker was the lead sawyer for Joseph

Y. Shantz before he left to establish his own mill. However, the water flow at this location was not able to power the mill, so it too became a steam saw mill. The date for the establishment of this mill is not known, although Becker is listed as a sawmiller at Lot 14, Concession 1, Block A in the 1861 Census.

The 1851 Census of Canada reported that there were thirteen saw mills operating in Wilmot Township, all of which were water powered except for one. Six (or seven) of these saw mills were located on Plum Creek. The number of saw mills had increased by four from the nine that were reported in Smith's Gazetteer in 1846. Unfortunately, the only mill that appears to have reported details of operation in 1851 was William Puddicombe's.

In 1861, Geo R. and G.M. Tremaine's map of Waterloo County shows the location of several of the mills on Plum Creek and its tributaries. The mills run by Joseph Y. Shantz, Simon Shantz, John Hamacher, George Jutzi, Jacob Becker (W & S Moore farm) and Jacob Ratz are all found on this map. The corresponding mill ponds are also found for the water powered mills. There is no location for William Puddicombe's saw mill on the Tremaine map leading one to assume it had ceased operation or it was missed by the Tremaines when they compiled their map.

Although a low flowing stream today, Plum Creek served as the power source for several saw mills from the 1840s to the 1860s. The large stand of pine and oak trees known as the Wilmot Pinery appears to be the reason so many saw mills were set up in the rural area between Haysville, Wilmot Centre and Pinehill.

Heritage Day event in Wilmot taking place February 22 at the Wilmot Recreation Complex

By Veronica Reiner

The Township of Wilmot will celebrate Heritage Day 2023 at the Wilmot Recreation Complex from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. This year's event will feature lectures by Gary Warrick and Tanya-Hill Montour.

The Township has held a Heritage Day event for the past few decades, except during the pandemic when an online platform was provided. "This is the first year it is held on a Wednesday and that it has a

lecture to accompany," noted Curator Sherri Gropp.

When asked what she hopes visitors take away from the event, Gropp said, "A better understanding of the landscapes and life in this area before European settlement."

The event will take place in the community room. From 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., attendees can enjoy local heritage displays representing many different topics and themes. Displays will cover various heritage groups such as

Waterloo Historical Society, Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades, North Waterloo Branch of the ACO (Architectural Conservancy of Ontario), Tree Trust (REEP), Wilmot Ecumenical Working Group on Indigenous/Settler Relations, and Dickson & Bruce Productions Where History Meets Mystery.

From 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., there will be two lecturers, including Gary Warrick, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University and Tanya Hill-Montour, an

Archaeology Supervisor of the Six Nations of the Grand River. They will explore and explain the rich archaeological history of Wilmot Township, with a focus on Indigenous and Cultural Heritage Landscapes.

From 8 p.m. to 9 p.m., there will be refreshments offered, including Baden Coffee and cookies. Visitors will get the opportunity to ask questions to the lecturer and check out the heritage displays.

Everyone is welcome to this free event.

Optimist Club of Petersburg celebrates 40 years

By Veronica Reiner

The Optimist Club of Petersburg is celebrating 40 years since its establishment on February 16.

Charter members include Warren Bechthold, John Gutscher, Jim Mahoney, Bill Wettlaufer, Ross Ristau, Paul Tufford and Gary Spoar, who are still members today.

The group wanted the opportunity to thank the community for making this all possible, and supporting the organization for the past 40 years and into the future.

"The Optimist Club of New Dundee came to Petersburg 40 years ago, with the idea that Petersburg could use an Optimist Club to serve the youth in the community," said Warren. "Over about two to three months, there were 40 guys that signed the paperwork, and the club was officially organized on February 16, 1983."

The Optimist Club of Petersburg helped to organize and sponsor about nine other Optimist clubs. They have also held countless fundraisers to support the community, including dances, Byrd Daze, fertilizer sales, raffles like shopping sprees, 50/50 draws, Hasenpfeffer Dinner, Valentine's Dinner, BBQ at car shows, Big Tent event, Drive by Dinners and the Breakfast in the Park.

Breakfast in the Park has been ongoing since the summer 1983, when attendance was 70 to 90 people. The community has helped grow this to 400 to 600 people for the Father's Day Breakfast, along with a car show attendance of 1,800 people.

"It's helping out kids in the community, as well as building friendships and camaraderie with other members, whether it's in Petersburg, or other Optimist clubs like New Hamburg or in New Dundee... you give a little bit, you get a lot more back," said Warren.

The fundraisers held have support many groups, organizations and families, including Scouts, Girl Guides, bike rodeos, sports teams (hockey, soccer, baseball and ringette), London Children's Hospital (cancer unit), Grand River Hospital (pediatric unit), families with children with cancer, Wilmot Family Resource Centre, Interfaith Counselling (youth counselling), Lutherwood (youth counselling), disaster relief programs and much more.

Club members go above and beyond for members in the community. They built a handicap ramp for a senior from Morning-side Retirement Village in New Hamburg. "We have helped people in similar situations with their mobility," said Warren.

One of the group's most visible projects happened in 1989 when we worked with the Petersburg Park's board to build the picnic

shelter and renovate and enlarge the attached building. Without this, countless family picnics, ball tournaments and the Breakfast in the Park could not happen each year.

The Petersburg Optimist Club holds one business meeting and one social meeting per month, where the club members go out for dinner. The meetings are typically from September until the end of May.

Warren said the summers are busy for the club. "From the end of May until the end of August, we can do anywhere between 18 to 20 barbecue events in that three month period," he said.

The club also votes on various topics, such as which charities will benefit from the Petersburg Optimist Club and how much money will be donated. Every member gets a voice. "Everything is discussed and voted on, the process is democratic, it's whatever the majority feels is right," said Warren. "That's the way we operate."

In addition to Petersburg residents, club members come from across Ontario, including Wellesley, Kitchener, Cambridge, Grand Bend and Peterborough. "A lot of members have lived in Petersburg, or they have a friend from Petersburg and joined because of that friend," said Warren.

Charter members include Jack Agnew, Bill Kleinschmidt, Terry Puloski, Roger Bechthold, Brian Knipfel, Ross Ristau, Warren Bechthold, Harry Knipfel, Clare Roth, Tony Bezpaly, Irvin Knipfel, Allan Scharlach, Earl Brandon, John Knipfel, Ernie Schofield, Bill Chopiak, Peter Knipfel, George Schmalz, Marten Feeny, Keith Kraan, Ted Scott, Vince Foreman Jr., Henrey Kraus, Jerry Smith, Randy Delaney, Terry Letson, Gord Spiegelberg, Ken Griese, Jeff Lobb, Gary Spoar, John Gutscher, Jim Mahoney, Paul Tufford, John Hinton, Brian Maurice, Bill Wettlaufer, Jake Hooisma, Ross Mueller, Bob Uhrig and Steve Palmer.

Current members include J.P. Arnold, Al Macisaac, Ross Ristau (charter member), Stewart Bechthold, Bill Madill, Pete Speek, Warren Bechthold (charter member), Jim Mahoney (charter member), Gary Spoar (charter member), Glen Bryans, Steve Malleck, Mike Taylor, Burt Currie, Stan Morawski, Bill Thorne, Sandor Dosman, Jim Pipe, Mike Tufford, John Gutscher (charter member), Don Reimens, Paul Tufford (charter member), Sandra Hepditch and Bill Wettlaufer (charter member).

"Thank you again for your support of the Optimist Club of Petersburg in our first 40 years," said President Jim Pipe in a letter acknowledging the accomplishment. "Together we can continue to serve the youth and the community in which we live for a better tomorrow."



The Petersburg Optimist Club. Front left to right: Warren Bechthold – charter member, John Gutscher – charter member, Paul Tufford – charter member, and Jim Pipe – President. Back left to right: Stewart Bechthold, Mike Tufford, Al MacIsaac, Pete Speek, Sandor Dosman, J.P. Arnold, Steve Malleck, and Danny Cinarilli. (Photo credit: Veronica Reiner)

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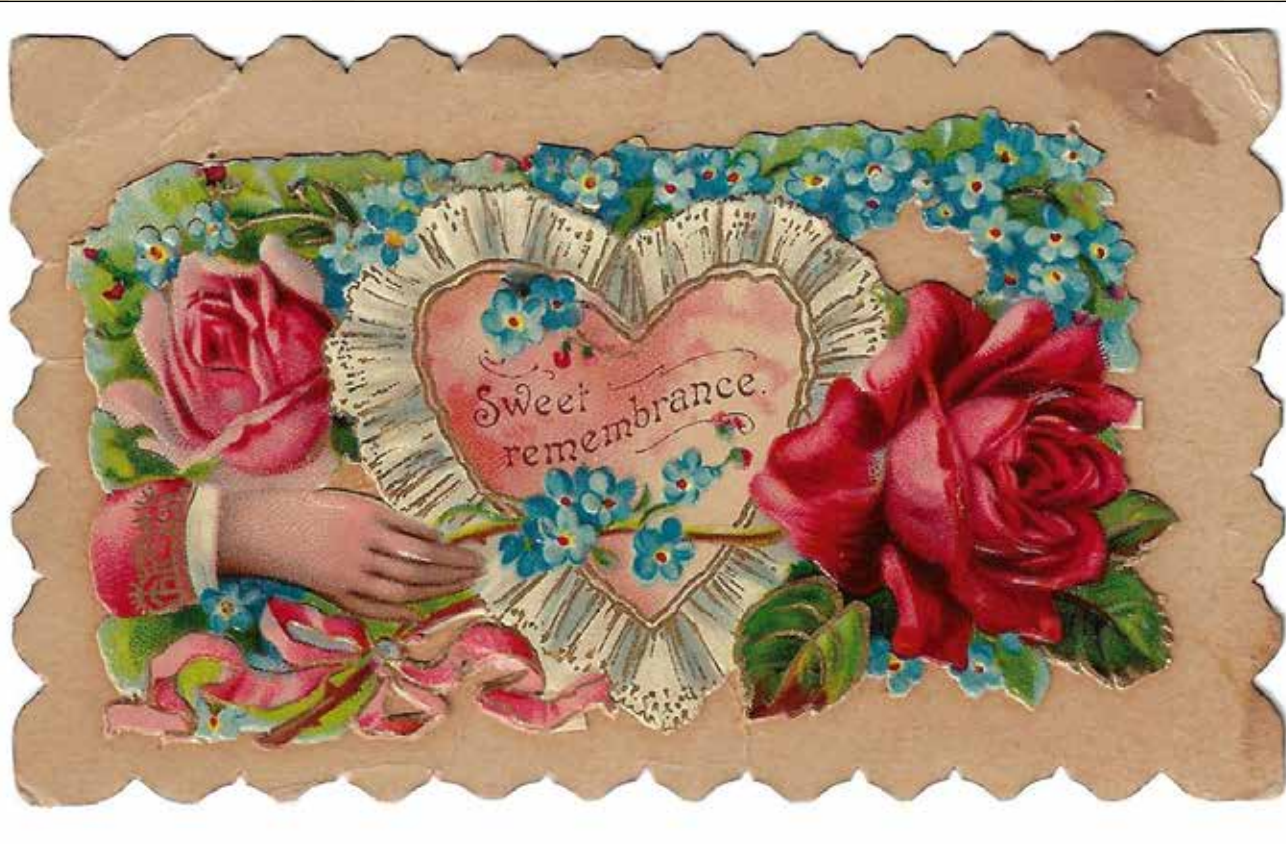
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Is Valentine's Day Obsolete?



Nancy Maitland, Wellesley Township Heritage and Historical Society

Judging by the advertising on TV and on-line and the last minute lineups for flowers at the grocery stores, Valentine's Day continues to be popular ... at least with older generations. Schools, on the other

hand, are rethinking the "celebration of love." One school in Kitchener decided not to celebrate and asked students not to bring cards or treats to school on that day. Time will tell if this decision is repeated elsewhere.

Back in the day, children got excited about

the prospect of giving and receiving cards and notes, perhaps to or from a secret admirer. Teachers got in the act too. Cards ranged from fancy "store bought" to perhaps more sincere home-made cards. And of course, cards and gifts were exchanged by grownups too.

The Wellesley Township Heritage and Historical Society collections contains examples of all kinds of cards - large, fancy Victorian hearts; solemn heartfelt confessions of love; smart-alecky postcards and of course, homemade treasures. Here are a few of our "treasures."



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Whisked up in Wilmot - Food Exhibit at Castle Kilbride



By Taylor Hynes, Museum Assistant

Nothing brings people closer together than food! Wilmot has produced many fine food products. Whether it was in the family home or produced to distribute globally, Wilmot takes the cake... and cheese... and butter!

This year, Castle Kilbride is excited to announce its 2023 exhibit, Whisked Up in Wilmot: All About Food! With this exciting exhibit, guests will be welcomed to explore foods and food productions from pre-settlement to today that influence Wilmot. Focuses include industries, produce, beverages, ornate food service pieces and cultural influences!

Alongside the popular foods farmed in the area, such as apples and industries like creameries, guests will also be shown examples of cherished recipes from local families of the area. These recipes range from elaborate dinners to sugary treats bound to excite everyone's sweet tooth! Included is an example of a recipe for Welsh Rarebit from the Livingston Archives at Castle Kilbride. Welsh Rarebit is a dish consisting of a hot cheese-based sauce served over slices of toasted bread, in the case of this recipe, hot soda biscuits.

In addition to Whisked Up in Wilmot: All About Food, Castle Kilbride will also be exhibiting Say Cheese in the Belvedere Gallery. This display will highlight the

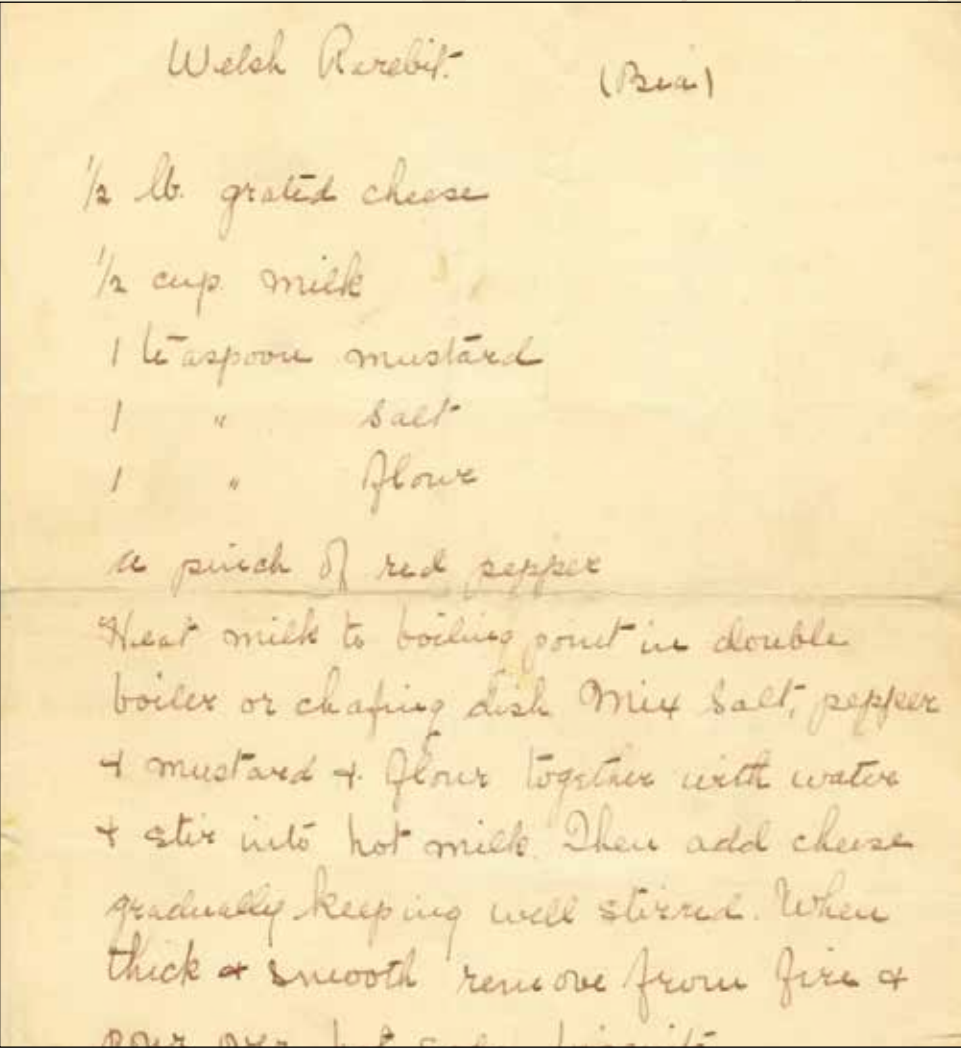
many creamery and cheese factories of Wilmot's past through wonderful photographs from the museum's collection.

Castle Kilbride is pleased to present this fun and entertaining display that is sure to work up an appetite! We welcome you and your family to enjoy this exciting exhibit from March 15 to December 30, 2023.

Say Cheese - History of the Baden Cheese Factory

The museum could not have an exhibit about food and not mention the cheese industry! The museum boasts a large collection of photographs from the Baden Cheese Factory in particular.

The Baden Cheese Factory was owned and operated by the Gingerich family for nearly a century. The factory began around 1905 with one employee working out of a garage. In 1915 the company purchased an old hotel on Synder's Road and started making cheese and butter in the beer cellars. The cheese gained quick favour with residents, with cheddar and Limburger being the most popular. At its height, the factory once produced 5,000 pounds of potent Limburger cheese! They introduced new types of cheese over the time, like Baden Colby, which received numerous national awards! The Baden Cheese Factory's churned out cheese until 1998.



**Community creates our sense of connection.
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You belong here.**

As a member of the Heritage Committee, I am proud to advocate for our Arts and Heritage sectors.

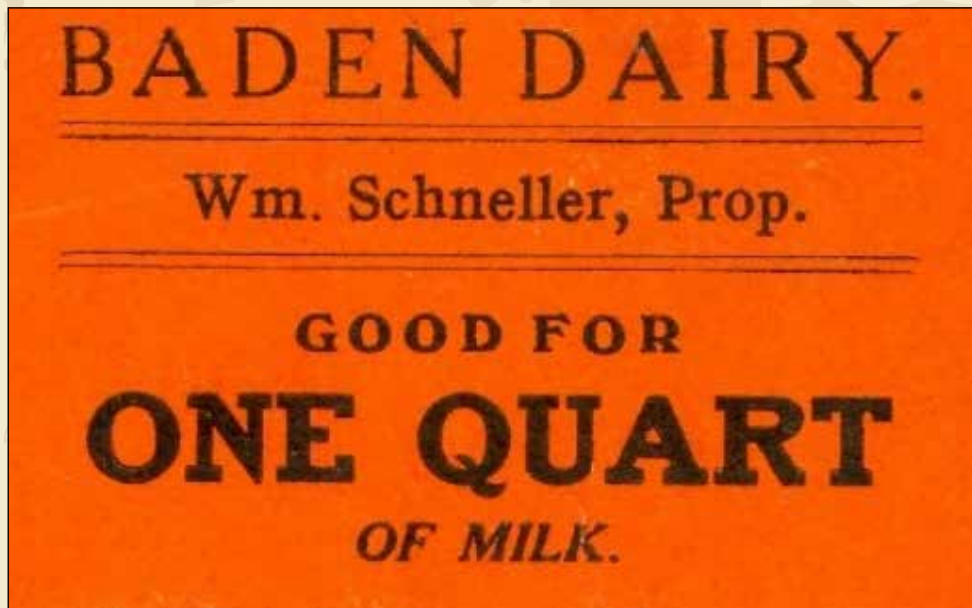


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Brad Schneller Collection



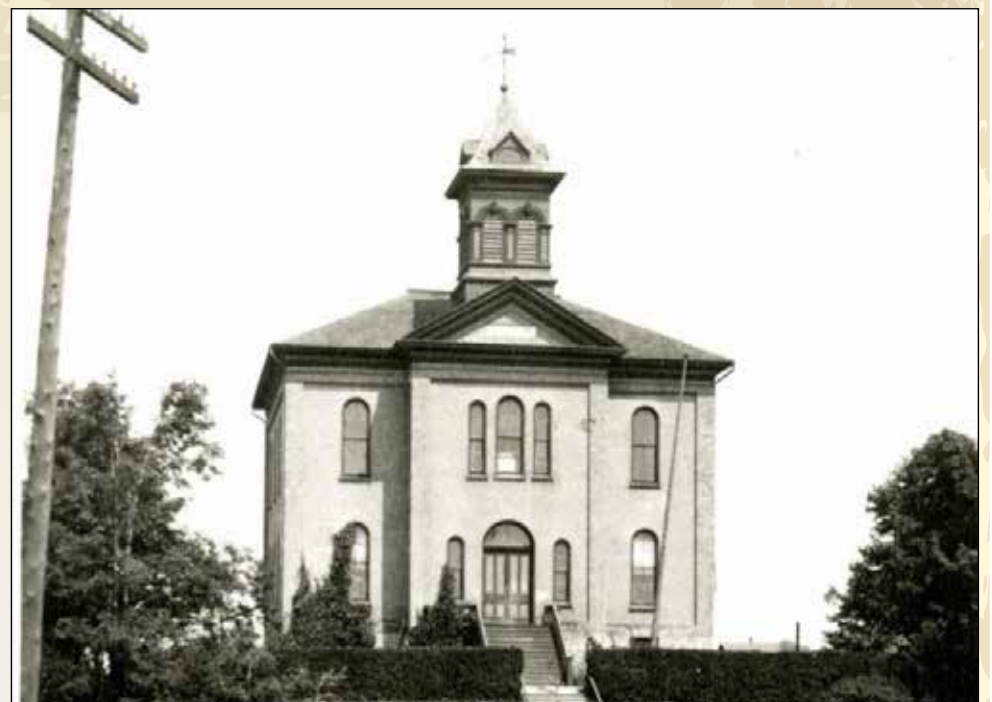
By Taylor Hynes, Museum Assistant

In November of 2022, Castle Kilbride was excited to accept a generous donation from a former resident of Baden, Brad Schneller. Schneller's donation is an impressive collection of items used on his family farm located on Snyder's Road South in Baden as well as other items from Wilmot Township.

One of the first items in the donation was a large cast iron school bell which sat atop S.S. #13 Baden School house. S.S. #13 was a four room, two-storey schoolhouse built in 1886 on Snyder's Road East. It served as a school until 1956 and then was later

demolished in 1997. The bell is believed to be American made and would have been a familiar sound for many generations of children growing up in Baden!

Another item donated by Schneller was a glass quart milk bottle from Spruce Grove Dairy. Schneller's father, J. Wilfred Schneller, inherited Baden Dairy from his parents, which he later renamed Spruce Grove Dairy. Spruce Grove was in operation from 1929 to 1943 and was known for its impressive purebred Ayrshire cattle herd. Ayrshire cattle were known for their higher butterfat production, which was ideal for the dairy. On the donated quart bottle, the dairy's logo has been applied in



an orange ACC decal which recommends buyers to "Drink More Ayrshire Milk."

Lastly, Schneller donated an electric fencer from the Baden Electric Fence Co. The Baden Electric Fence Co. was formed in 1939 by J. Wilfred Schneller and Stuart Kuhn. The company started production in the back of Kuhn's General Hardware Store but later moved to a larger building on Snyder's Road West beside the original Opera House when product demand grew. The donated fencer unit is a weather-proof squared metal box that would have held four dry cell batteries (6 volts), which would have provided a charge to farm fencing. Baden Electric Fence Co.

compared their product to "the modern watchdog" as a small safe charge would keep animals within their pastures.

In addition to these items, Schneller's donation also includes an apple butter rake, apple drying rack, tree sap collection bucket, maple syrup thermometer, and mallet used to make sauerkraut. All of these artifacts are wonderful examples of food preparation tools that were used to make some of the most popular foods in Wilmot. Many of Schneller's donations will be on display in Castle Kilbride's newest exhibit, Whisked Up in Wilmot: All About Food, on exhibit from March 15 to December 30, 2023.

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History of the former B-W Feed & Seed mill building



Some historical photos of the former B-W Feed & Seed mill building. It will now become an affordable housing project called the Mill Block Community. (Photos contributed)

By Veronica Reiner

In about two years or so, the former B-W Feed & Seed mill building in downtown New Hamburg will become an affordable housing project called the Mill Block Community. It will be a new use for the building with a rich and storied past.

The building was sold to the Love Your Neighbours Communities (LYNC) group in October 2022. Before that, it was owned by Dave and Cindy Bender since 2012.

"We sold all of our property that we had downtown New Hamburg to LYNC - two parcels, the parcel at 183 Mill Street that is the old feed mill, LYNC has purchased," explained Dave. "We had a warehouse at 88 Huron Street, and LYNC has purchased that as well."

B-W Feed and Seed produces feed for all facets of commercial livestock. The business was established in 1966 by Dave's father and an uncle, and the family purchased the mill building in 1972.

The history of the building dates back to the 1800s. The town of New Hamburg, similar to many early settlements, was built around a feed mill. "The first grist flour mill was built in New Hamburg, and that's the reason the dam was put in - the town built up around it," said Dave.

Settlement in Wilmot was in its very first decade. In 1833, Josiah Cushman arrived and received a grant of land, including the right to build a dam on the river to use its power. Early settlers needed grain milling and timber sawing. These services were to be provided by Cushman for the construction of the dam and mill.

Unfortunately, in the summer of 1834, a cholera epidemic swept through the area, and killed Cushman, his wife and children. In early 1837, the property was sold to mortgage holder, Absalom Shade, an influential businessman from Galt with substantial holdings and political interests.

Shade sold the New Hamburg mill and water rights to William Scott in 1845. Within a few more years, Scott began to construct a new mill. A mill race was built to power the operation, about a third of a mile long, to lead water from the dam, north through the new mill and downstream to the river. This formed a loop around what was to become the present business area.

According to census records, the mill was a substantial operation and was sold to

the Messrs within a few years. William Scott reacquired the operation for a time, and eventually sold it to the firm of Parker and Wilson in early 1864. Scott and his family left to live in New Zealand. After about 10 years, Parker and Wilson sold the mill to Samuel Merner and John Wilson. Merner was a pioneer resident of the area since 1837 and was a prominent businessman. He bought out his partner's interest in 1879, leased it, then sold it to his brother, Fred.

Fred Merner carried on until leasing the operation to Joseph Laird and James Hamilton in 1888. A boiler explosion severely damaged the three story frame building in 1889. Fred rebuilt the mill, then sold it to his brother, Christian. Once again, for some years, several different people operated the mill.

"There was a fire at the turn of the century," said Dave. "In 1904, it was opened up in the building that is currently there."

In 1902, the frame building was completely destroyed by a fire. After that, no milling activity took place and the property was not used for about two years. This all changed when the Stuart brothers of Mitchell acquired the property and built the present three storey brick structure, which remains today. The company was incorporated as Stuart Brothers Ltd. four years later, then carried on until selling to New Hamburg Flour Mills Ltd. early in 1922.

The new company was headed by Mr. and Mrs. A.H. Otto, J.G. Wolverton and Mrs. E.D. Luckhardt. The owners were Abraham Otto and Charles Eidt until 1936. After that, Wm. Knechtel and Sons, a Hannover firm, took it over until 1962, when it became New Hamburg Mills Ltd.

Its successor became Great Star Flour of St. Marys. Earl Bender and Cecil Wagler purchased the building in 1972, seeing it as the right time to expand and diversify. Their business had outgrown the Huron Street buildings, and the farmers were requesting bulk feed delivery. Their location to the mill facility allowed B-W to take on the Shur Gain Franchise, produce bulk feeds and offer broader service of grinding and mixing feeds. It also allowed them to expand the product line to include fencing supplies, farm seeds, hardware, animal health products and lawn and garden seeds.

The customer base expanded, and a feed store and warehouse in Bright was operated in 1987 to better serve customers

in that area. In 1990, growth prompted the move of lawn and garden seeds, along with pet foods and pet supplies, to the building at 88 Huron Street. Up until then, that building had been leased to various other businesses. The opening of Heritage Pet and Garden Counter allowed for more expansion of pet food lines, and lawn and garden supplies. In 1991, the E.G. Budd & Son store in Stratford was purchased to serve customers in that area with similar products as Heritage Pet & Garden.

In 1994, B-W entered a joint venture with another established feed mill to purchase the former hybrid turkey feed mill near Elmira. The mill, renamed as BWS Feeds, was another asset to the already estab-

lished and growing business. The growing hog business prompted B-W to start Phoenix Pork Inc. hog contracting business with farmers in 1999. This was located at 183 Mill Street.

B-W Feed and Seed has seen many changes over the years. They sold the E.G. Budd & Son store in 2000, and in 2005, interests in the BWS facility were also sold. The Bright store, in operation for 18 years, closed in October 2005 because of the decline in livestock numbers in that area.

Earl and Ferne Bender and Cecil and Reta Wagler retired, and passed the management of the B-W Feed and Seed to their sons, Dave Bender and Evan Wagler.



"We hope to breathe life back into this incredible building"
was the vision Marie Voisin had when she purchased
this Heritage site in 2014



During the restoration, a lot of history was discovered inside this 1872 structure at 214 Mill Street, New Hamburg such as old children's shoes, century-old wallpaper, tin and hand painted ceilings and much more.

The hotel was totally gutted and now features both the restored original yellow brick and new red brick and is home to 12 elegant one bedroom apartments for seniors; the main floor features commercial space with a bakery, travel agency, nano brewery, and restaurant/bar.

Marie's passion to restore this jewel earned her many regional and provincial awards.

To read more on her incredible journey and the Imperial visit: www.imperialnewhamburg.com

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*Trivia: In Canada. Only one cheese producer makes Limburger Cheese,
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130 km west of Toronto. (from cheeselover.ca)*

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Wilmot celebrates Black History Month

By Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette Staff

Every February, Canadians across the country participate in Black History Month events that explore the experiences and celebrate the accomplishments and legacy of Black Canadians.

2023 marked the 28th official Black History Month, with the theme this year as "Ours to Tell," which encourages the sharing of many stories of Black Canadians' success, sacrifice and triumph like Lincoln Alexander.

A leader in the fight for racial equity, Alexander was the first Black member of Parliament in 1968, as well as the first Black federal Cabinet Minister (as federal Minister of Labour), the first Black Chair of the Worker's Compensation Board of Ontario, and the 24th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from 1985 to 1991. He was the first person to serve five terms as the Chancellor of the University of Guelph from 1991 to 2007, and was also a governor of the Canadian Unity Council.

"Black History Month is an opportunity for us to recognize and celebrate the contributions Black Canadians make to our communities' quality of life", said Township of Wilmot Mayor Natasha Salonen. "People of African and Caribbean descent have greatly contributed to the cultural, economic, political and social develop-

ment of communities across the country and Black History Month is a time to learn more about their stories."

Throughout the month of February, the Township of Wilmot will be sharing the stories of influential Black Canadians on the township social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. Links to educational information and events across the Waterloo Region are also available on the township website at www.wilmot.ca/BlackHistoryMonth.

The commemoration of Black History Month dates back to 1926, when Harvard education African American historian Carter G. Woodson proposed setting aside a time devoted to honour the accomplishments of people of African Americans and to heightening awareness of Black history in the United States. This led to the establishment of Negro History Week in 1926. The celebration of Black history in Canada began shortly thereafter.

During the 1970s, the week became known as Black History Week and was expanded into Black History Month in 1976. In December 1995, the House of Commons officially and unanimously recognized February as Black History Month in Canada following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, Jean Augustine.



Carter G. Woodson. (Photo credit: Encyclopedia Britannica)

The Livingston Presbyterian Church



The church as of January 23. (Photo credit: Charles Okum)

The Livingston Presbyterian Church in Baden, Wilmot Township opened in 1895. It is the only Presbyterian church in Wilmot. It was designated under Part IV of The Ontario Heritage Act in June 2015.

The designation means the building's

historical features are protected and cannot be demolished or altered without permission from Wilmot Township, as advised by Heritage Wilmot.

The building is an example of Gothic Revival styling, with pointed arches and a



variety of window types, including many arched windows of varying sizes. The building's tower, gables, corner parapets and louvres are also unique. These features mark the church as an example of an architectural style no longer used.

The church has housed the Masonic Lodge since 1951 and its interior is decorated with furnishings more than 100 years old.

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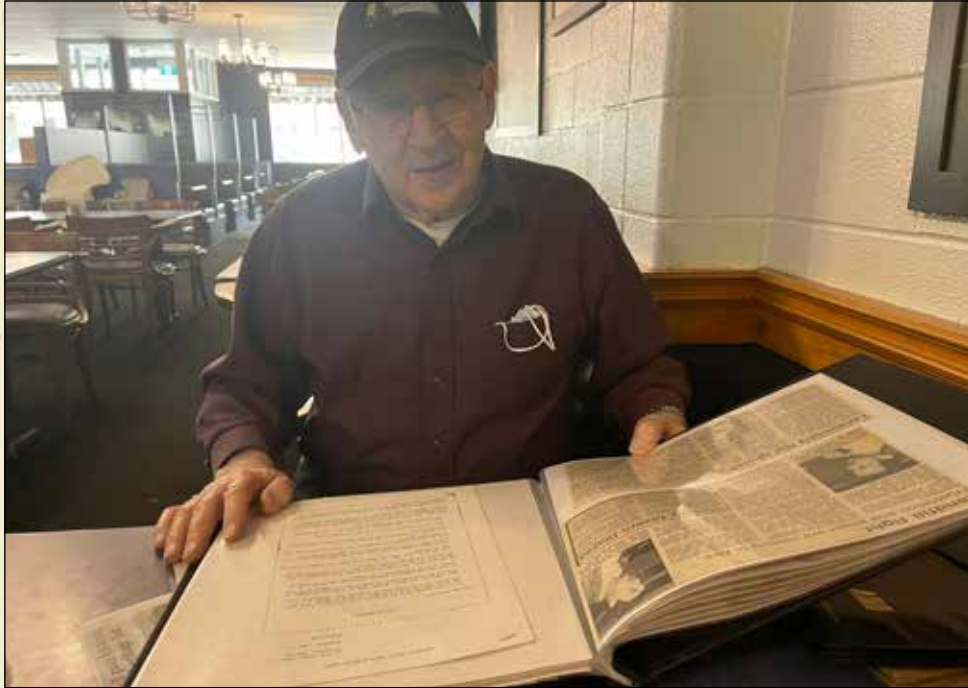
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Ralph Shantz with the History of Shantz Mennonite Church in Waterloo County



Above; former Wilmot Mayor Ralph Shantz looking over his scrap book with detailed history of the area that includes much on his family and roots in the Shantz Mennonite Church on Erbs Road west of Waterloo and north-east of Baden.



The first Shantz brick church built in 1853.

By Gary West

Even though it's been years since he's been Mayor of Wilmot Township, and involved in the initial stages of regional government in Waterloo County, Ralph Shantz is still very much an active historian. He is someone who cares immensely about the heritage of the Wilmot community and the people and places in it.

Over a coffee recently, the 88-year-old Shantz wanted to add to the story that this writer undertook last October when the new Shantz Mennonite Church, north of Baden on Erb's Road, had its grand opening inviting the public to the open house of the new ultra modern Shantz Church.

The following notes delve into the interesting history of the church.

Among the earliest settlers in Waterloo county was George R. Schmitt and his brother, John. They came from Germany to Buffalo in 1828 and then relocated to Wilmot Township on the farm opposite from where the Shantz church now stands. At that time, it was called the Schmitt meeting house and first began in the early 1830s.

The log building also served as a schoolhouse with George Schmitt as its teacher. It is a little unclear whether the first congregation was started by George Schmitt or by bishop Benjamin Eby. What is clear is that bishop Eby greatly influenced Schmitt and the early Shantz church.

George Schmitt who was of German-Lutheran descent, worked for Benjamin Eby, and most likely Bishop Eby influenced him to accept the Mennonite faith. He was baptized in 1840. Six months later George Schmitt, the first minister of the congregation which met in the Schmitt school house, was ordained by Bishop Benjamin Eby. The early church was attended by the Jonas Shantz and the John Shantz families, as well as John K. Snyder and the George R. Schmitt families.

There were a number of marriages between the members of the next generations.

Jonas Shantz and John Shantz were both sons of Christian Shantz. Jonas married Hannah Snyder and they moved to lot 15 on Erb's Road several lots west of the Schmitt farm. He cleared the land which his father had bought as crown land from the government. He and his wife had eight children. John C Shantz, married and then settled on an adjoining farm on lot 14. He and his wife Anna had 12 children.

Descendants from these founding families now form the

fifth and sixth generation, who still attend Shantz church today. However, the number of different family names had increased to 25 by 1960, and by 50 total by the beginning of the year 2000. The family tree includes many of the Shantz and Schmitt families.

In 1853, David Shantz and his wife, Barbara donated a parcel of land on which to build a church. Later that year, the congregation from the log Schmitt meeting house moved across Erb's Road into a new stone church building. This reflected the trend towards having proper churches, instead of all purpose meeting houses.

As was common in many area Mennonite churches, the donors family name was used by the congregation. The church was known as the Shantz meeting house, and

around the turn of the century, the name changed to simply Shantz church.

Ralph Shantz, along with being a historian, a Wilmot township Mayor, and a prosperous EGG farmer, spent years as a director with Egg farmers of Ontario in its early years. He has to be commended for preserving the history of the past that include the Shantz Mennonite church of today. His wife Dorothy, who passed away in late November, brought the Schmitt name into full circle with the Shantz's and Ralph will say she was more an historian than he.

Note: the Schmitt name in some families is now spelled Schmidt as in the large financial gift given by Harold and Enid Schmidt, to build the new Shantz Church.



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Renovating the one room Irish School in North Easthope Township

By Gary West

With this heritage edition of the Gazette, it's of interest to recognize some of the old one room schools in North Easthope Township of Perth County.

In years gone by, the one and two room schools went by the United School Sections and in this story, we're referring to U.S.S. #6, which was built at the turn of the century and became known as the Irish school, situated northeast of Stratford on what is now known as Line 37 (Vivian St.)

Many settlers in the area were from Irish descent and the school ran until 1967, when it was declared redundant by the school board.

In 1977, Dave and Candy Logan of Stratford bought the one acre property with the idea of converting the school house into their residence. Upon further study, they concluded the building was too close to the road, and learned it would cost too much at the time to renovate. They opted to build a new house toward the back of the lot, where they still live today.

In the summer of 2022, Dave and Candy's son, Barry, felt that restoring the old school was something he'd like to undertake, to preserve the past. With the help of friends, he began the operation of cleaning the brick and restoring the school to its original state inside.

The Logans, apart from putting glass back in all of the windows, and adding a steel roof in 1980, have left the school much like it was originally. They say that regularly, former teachers and students stop in and ask to view the interior. A former teacher walked to the centre of the classroom, and on the floor, pointed to the burn mark created by the wooden stove that once heated the building with wood, and warmed the students lunches.

Even though the restoration is ongoing, Barry Logan and his family would like to have the old school house restored, as another one room school a couple miles to the east has done, the Brocksden school museum, where activities happen in the summer organized by an active group of former teachers and students.



The U.S.S. #6 (the Irish School) in the process of being renovated to its original state by the present owners.

St. Agatha man achieves national fame in 1930 after building and flying a homemade plane

By Veronica Reiner

On January 30, 1930, Theodore Dietrich of St. Agatha achieved national fame when he built and flew a nine-foot plane. He was one of the first men to fly a homemade airplane in Canada.

He flew the plane on a cold, snowy Monday, and circled 500 feet in the air in the plane built by his brother and him. His craft was called the Skylark, and was powered by a four-cylinder motorcycle engine bought from a Toronto policeman. The plane weighed 325 pounds and had a 25-foot wingspan. It was dismantled and sold to the Royal Canadian Air Force for cadet training in 1940.

Theodore was born in St. Agatha, a son of Louis Dietrich and Mary Bucheit. He was a lifelong member of St. Agatha RC Church, serving the church in many capacities over the year. He was also on the board of directors of St. Mary's Hospital and on the board of Catholic Social Services.

He was a former councillor and reeve of Wilmot township, was on the board of St. Agatha Children's Village and was a founding member of the Greenwood Rod and Gun Club. He was past president of the K-W Flying Club and a member of Knights of Columbus, Waterloo Council.

Theodore was a proprietor of the Theodore Dietrich Garage in St. Agatha for 52 years, retiring in 1972. He was the husband of Louise Schummer, father of Ted and his wife Mary Ann of St. Agatha, Mary Pat (Mrs. Peter Dietrich) of Arlington Heights, brother of William and Edwin of St. Agatha, and Caroline, Mary Frances and Craig of Arlington Heights. He was predeceased by his first wife, Nellie Mayer in 1951 and by one sister.

(Photo: Dietrich's Garage in St. Agatha c. 1929.)



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