# May

## Agriculture: The Deep Roots of Southwold

Southwold Township, located in Elgin County, Ontario, has a rich agricultural history deeply tied to its settlement and development. The area was opened for settlement in 1792, with the first colonists arriving in 1809. By 1817, all lots along the Talbot Road were occupied, marking the beginning of organized farming in the region.

Agriculture in Southwold has traditionally focused on crops like corn and soybeans, benefiting from the township's fertile soil and favourable climate.

Livestock production has been a cornerstone of Southwold Township's agricultural history, evolving significantly over the past 175 years.

Over time, the community established agricultural societies and fairs, such as the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society's fair, which began in 1854. These events showcased farming innovations and fostered a sense of community among local farmers.

The township's agricultural legacy is also reflected in its historical maps and records, which document land ownership and farming practices over the years. Today, Southwold remains a vital agricultural zone, contributing significantly to the region's economy and heritage.

## Early Southwold

As the Indigenous inhabitants of this land depended on the “three sisters” crops of corn, beans and squash to augment their diets, so followed the first pioneers to the Talbot settlements.

The earliest Southwold pioneer needed to clear his land, hunt or raise his own meat and grow his own grains, fruits and vegetables. Most had to build their own homes and farm buildings. Forests needed to be cleared. The survival of the pioneer was determined greatly by their knowledge and expertise in agriculture.

Early pioneer farmers in Southwold Township relied on simple yet effective tools to cultivate the land and sustain their livelihoods. These included wooden plows, which were often handmade and pulled by oxen or horses, and scythes for cutting crops. They also used hoes for weeding and preparing soil, as well as sickles for harvesting grain. These tools were labor-intensive but essential for survival in the early days of settlement.

It was not until the late 18th century that large-scale settlement of farmland took place with the establishment of a land granting process. To earn the right to own a piece of property, emigrants petitioned the Crown with a promise to fulfil certain duties, such as clearing trees, cultivating the soil, and building houses. If the requirements were met, the settler was granted ownership. Others were awarded land for free, including members of the militia and United Empire Loyalists, as rewards for their allegiance and service to the King.

When the American Revolution ended in 1783, many British loyalists, who were forced to leave the United States, chose to settle in what would become Ontario. They were offered free land, tools, and seeds.

One man saw an opportunity and his initiative paved the way for what we now know as Southwold Township.

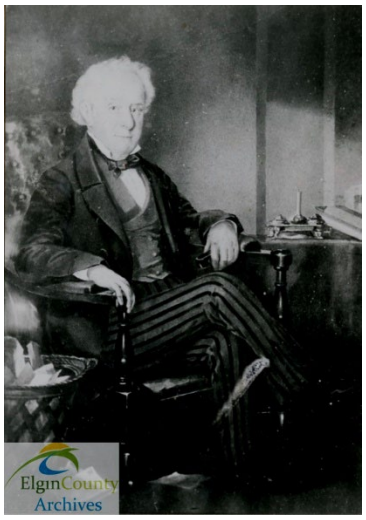
## **Col. Thomas Talbot** – *Founder of the Talbot Settlement*

Thomas Talbot (July 19, 1771 – February 5, 1853) was an Irish-born Canadian soldier and colonial administrator.

Talbot received a commission in the British army as ensign before he was twelve years old. As a young man, he saw active service in Holland and at Gibraltar.

Talbot immigrated to Canada in 1791, where he became personal secretary to John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada.

Talbot convinced the government to allow him to implement a land settlement scheme along the shore of Lake Erie. He chose property which today is in Elgin County, Ontario.

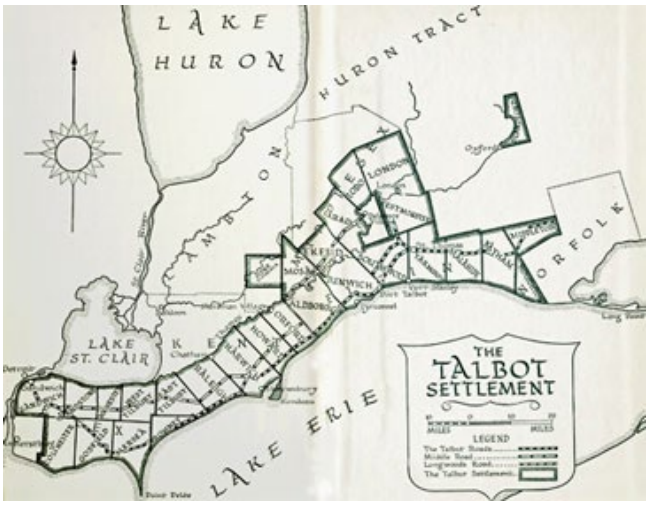




(*left*) **Colonel Thomas Talbot, circa 1840**
(*right*) **This watercolour painting on paper by Sir Richard Airey shows Colonel Thomas Talbot in the "Den" at his home. (circa 1850)** **(Photos: Elgin County Archives)**

Talbot's administration was regarded as despotic. He was infamous for registering settlers' names on the local settlement map in pencil and if displeased, was alleged to have erased their entry. However, his

insistence on provision of good roads (notably the eponymous Talbot Trail), maintenance of the roads by the settlers, and the removal of Crown and clergy reserves from main roads quickly resulted in the Talbot Settlement becoming the most prosperous part of the province.




**Map of the Talbot Settlement, from Frederick C. Hamil's Lake Erie Baron: The Story of Colonel Thomas Talbot**

Col. Talbot named the Southwold community of Fingal after the area around Malahide, his ancestral home in Ireland. Fingal got its name because the area reminded the early settlers of the plains of Fingal north of Dublin, which extends to the foot of the Mourne Mountains.

Talbot himself gave his name to Talbotville (a community in Southwold, Ontario) and the city of St. Thomas, Ontario, as well as Colonel Talbot Road and Talbot Street in both London and St. Thomas.

Thomas Talbot died in London on February 6, 1853, at the London Ontario residence of his close friend, George MacBeth, who made the funeral arrangements.

As Talbot's body was transported back to Port Talbot for burial, the man who founded the settlement took his final ride through Southwold.

***Reference:*** *Sim's History of Elgin County Vol. 1*

## **Pioneer Profile: Richard Williams** *(1779 – 1856)*

One of the earliest settlers to Southwold typifies the pioneer experience.

On the 4th of April, 1817, Richard Williams with his family arrived at the Talbot settlement. In due course, Williams provided the necessary cash to Col. Thomas Talbot and purchased a previously settled on lot 8, Talbot Street, near Watson's Corners, west of Fingal.

The Williams family, typical of Southwold pioneers, began to scratch out a living on their land.

The greatest difficulty the settlers had to contend with at the time of the arrival of Richard Williams was the grinding of their wheat and corn, important staples of their diet. Williams set out to resolve that problem to the great benefit of his community.

Williams purchased a hand-mill and set it up in his own house. The mill was operated by a large crank that could be worked by two men who supplied the power to the mill.

For quite a long time this mill was kept in almost constant motion.

The settlers would bring their grist to the house and remain up all night awaiting their turn.

Richard Williams also erected the first fly-shuttle loom in the settlement in his own house, and it was not long after till these looms became general. They were a great improvement on the looms previously in use. In those days all the clothes of every description were made on the farm.

The settler kept sheep and sheared them; his wife and daughter spun and wove the wool into cloth. There was no jealousy among the damsels on account of fashion of richness of fabric; all wore the flannel made in the hand-loom, and the style seldom varied.

There were no blacksmiths or shoemakers in the vicinity, and various were the makeshifts used in lieu of the handiwork of these useful "mechanics."

Richard Williams considered the challenges of his era and took proactive steps to make improvements. In lightening his own burdens, he also shared the benefits with his neighbours.

Richard Williams prospered, and he lived to see the settlement enjoying all the advantages of modern civilization. He died in his seventy-eighth year *(d. 1856)* and was buried in the Fingal Cemetery.

**References:** *Sim's History of Elgin / Vol. 1*

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DOMINION OF CANADA!

V. R.

EMIGRATION

TO THE

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO.

To Capitalists, Tenant Farmers, Agricultural Labourers, Mechanics,

Day Labourers, and all parties desirous of improving their circumstances by emigrating to a new country.

TENANT FARMERS WITH LIMITED CAPITAL

A FREE GRANT OF LAND

(WITHOUT ANY CHARGE WHATEVER)

All Persons over 18 years of age can obtain a Free Grant of 100 Acres.

REGISTERS OF THE LABOUR MARKET.

JOHN CARLING,

Commissioner of Agriculture and Public Works for the Province of Ontario.

Please Post in a Good Position, for Public Information.

**Emigration to the Province of Ontario, 1869**
**Department of Immigration Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

## 19th Century Southwold

**An Agricultural Analysis of Elgin County** (1930) described the end of the early pioneer era and the beginning of the new industrial age in Southwold and the rest of Elgin County in the last half of the 19th century.

*"The day when the pioneer's axe cut and shaped everything was past, saw mills and factories were plentiful. The day of coarse flour pounded out by hand was gone. The newly arrived infant settler was no longer rocked in a sap trough cradle, nor the departed settler interred in a dug-out log coffin. Flint and steel has given place to Lucifer matches. He who carried his load to mill upon his back or jolted along at a snail's pace behind the patient oxen—has first his saddle horse, then horse and wagon and sometimes his carriage or buggy. Thus, the first chapter of history was written. Progress had been made and the old pioneers, who had fought a good fight handed on to posterity the results of their life's work—a heritage that their descendants have not dissipated as will be seen in the county's development ... "*

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In the early days, Southwold's settlers raised livestock primarily for subsistence. Cattle, pigs, sheep, and poultry were common, providing meat, milk, wool, and eggs for families. Oxen were also used as draft animals for plowing and transportation.

One animal was essential and constant through the 19th Century in Southwold. It would be difficult to conceive how the farmers of Southwold Township could have survived without their horses. Even into the 20th century (i.e. 1927), Elgin County farms put twenty-six percent of their livestock investment into horses.

## The Essential Role of Horses

In 19th-century Southwold, horses were indispensable to daily life and agriculture. They played a central role in farming, transportation, and community activities.

Horses were the backbone of farming operations, used for plowing fields, harrowing, planting, and harvesting crops. They provided the power needed to operate early farm machinery like seed drills and threshing machines.

The primary means of transport for people and goods, farmers relied on horse-drawn wagons to take produce to markets and bring supplies back to their farms.

The reliance on horses began to decline with the advent of mechanized vehicles in the early 20th century, but their contributions to Southwold's growth and prosperity in the 19th century were profound.


Wallace Cummings, who farmed on the East River Road, Southwold, still had lots of work for this fine pair as they plow in 1957. This scene was a familiar site in the 19th Century and early 20th Century Southwold countryside**.**

**Photo: Elgin County Archives**

*"Agriculture in its several branches has been, and is now, the foundation on which rests the entire industrial fabric of Ontario. On its prosperity all classes depend – and with a good crop or a bad one, business operations, the abundance of money, and the social comforts of our whole people will rise and fall, as do the waters of the sea with the flow and ebb of the tide."* **The Canadian Farmer (**January 15, 1873)

In the latter half of the 19th century, Southwold agriculture was expanding along with the community. The industrial revolution had begun and the days of relying on the primitive tools of the early pioneer were over.

Livestock markets began to emerge as surplus production allowed farmers to sell animals and animal products locally.

In 1851, Southwold recorded a population of 2,300 residents.

16,000 acres of Southwold were under cultivation. To manage their grain, three grist mills were in operation. Three saw mills were busy providing building materials for the growing Southwold farms, residences and business.

It was a peak period of growth in Southwold.

In 1848, **MacPherson, Glasgow and Co.** built their foundry in Fingal and was turning out agricultural tools and equipment. Their signature product, apron-type threshing machines, would become popular across the province and even into American markets.

Apron-type threshing machines were an early innovation in agricultural technology, designed to separate grain from straw and chaff. These machines used a continuous apron or canvas belt to move the harvested crop through the threshing process. The apron carried the crop over a

series of beaters or rollers, which loosened the grain from the stalks. The separated grain was then collected, while the straw and chaff were discarded.

This design was a significant improvement over manual threshing methods, as it increased efficiency and reduced labor. Apron-type threshing machines were widely used in the 19th century and contributed to the mechanization of farming, paving the way for more advanced threshing equipment in the future.

**"The Challenge"** Threshing Machine, built in Fingal in 1877, boasted workmanship that was, *"...aided by the employment of (Southwold) men skilled for many years in this particular work, ensures to purchasers the greatest perfection attainable and is a guarantee none of our competitors can offer to the same extent."*

The foundry would continue operations in Southwold Township until 1898. They established the legacy of agriculture related businesses that have continued in Southwold over the past 175 years.

**The Challenge Threshing Machine (circa 1877) This last known locally preserved MacPherson, Glasgow and Co. threshing machine is on display at the Norwich and District Museum and Archives. (Len Lynch Photo)**

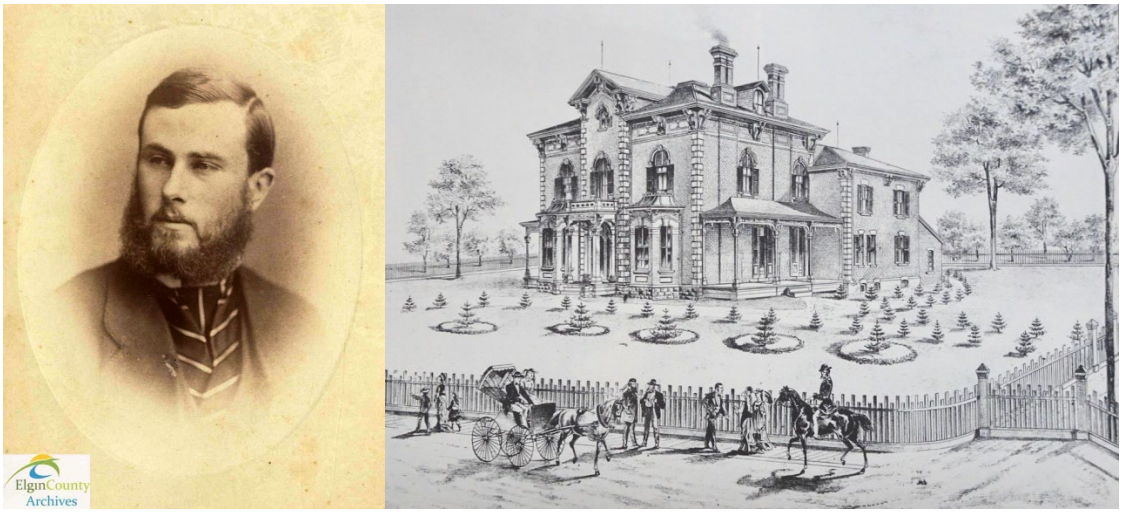
## Railways and Agriculture

In early pioneer times, the independent family farm used what they produced to sustain their own families and their neighbours. The arrival of railways in Southwold Township during the 19th century brought significant changes to the community. Railways like the Great Southern Railway and the Great Western Air Line Railway established lines through the township, enhancing transportation and connectivity. This development facilitated the movement of goods and people, boosting local industries and agriculture by providing easier access to markets.

The railways also contributed to the growth of settlements within the township, as stations became hubs of activity and commerce. They played a role in shaping the township's economy and infrastructure, making it a more integrated part of the broader region.

In 1871, John Shedden purchased land in Corsley along the southern line of the railroad tracks and began severing town lots. The village of Shedden was created.

George Casey, the area MP built a grain elevator, next to the train tracks. Shedden became a bustling grain depot almost immediately.



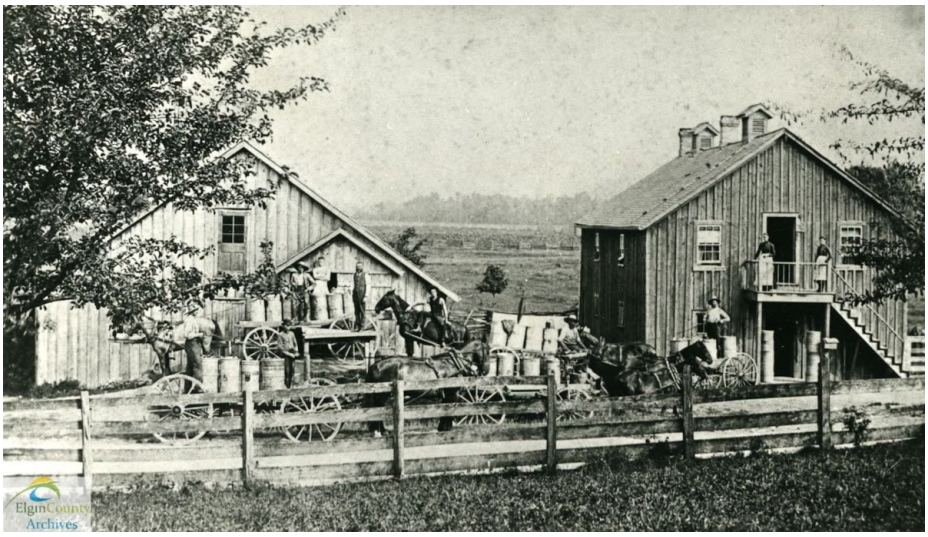

(*left*) **George E. Casey (1850-1903), MP, Elgin West, 1872-1900.**
(right) **Casey's stately home east of Fingal circa 1877. Photos: Elgin Heritage Archives**

Southwold farms began bringing their livestock and grains to Shedden for shipping to larger centres. Farmers utilized these railways to transport cattle, pigs, and other livestock to markets and processing facilities, significantly improving efficiency and expanding their reach to urban centres.

This development was a game-changer for Southwold's agricultural economy, as it allowed farmers to access larger markets and ensured fresher delivery of livestock.

## Southwold Cheese Factories

The West Magdala Cheese Factory began operation in Lawrence Station in 1871. They produced award winning cheese at the first Chicago World's Fair (1893)! This company continued to produce cheese and also "the sweetest butter in Elgin County" until 1951.




**West Magdala Cheese Factory (circa 1890) (Elgin Heritage Archives)**

Another successful cheese producer was located in Paynes Mills. The factory operated from the 1870s into the first half of the 20th Century.


**Paynes Mills Cheese Factory (circa 1895) (Elgin Heritage Archives)**

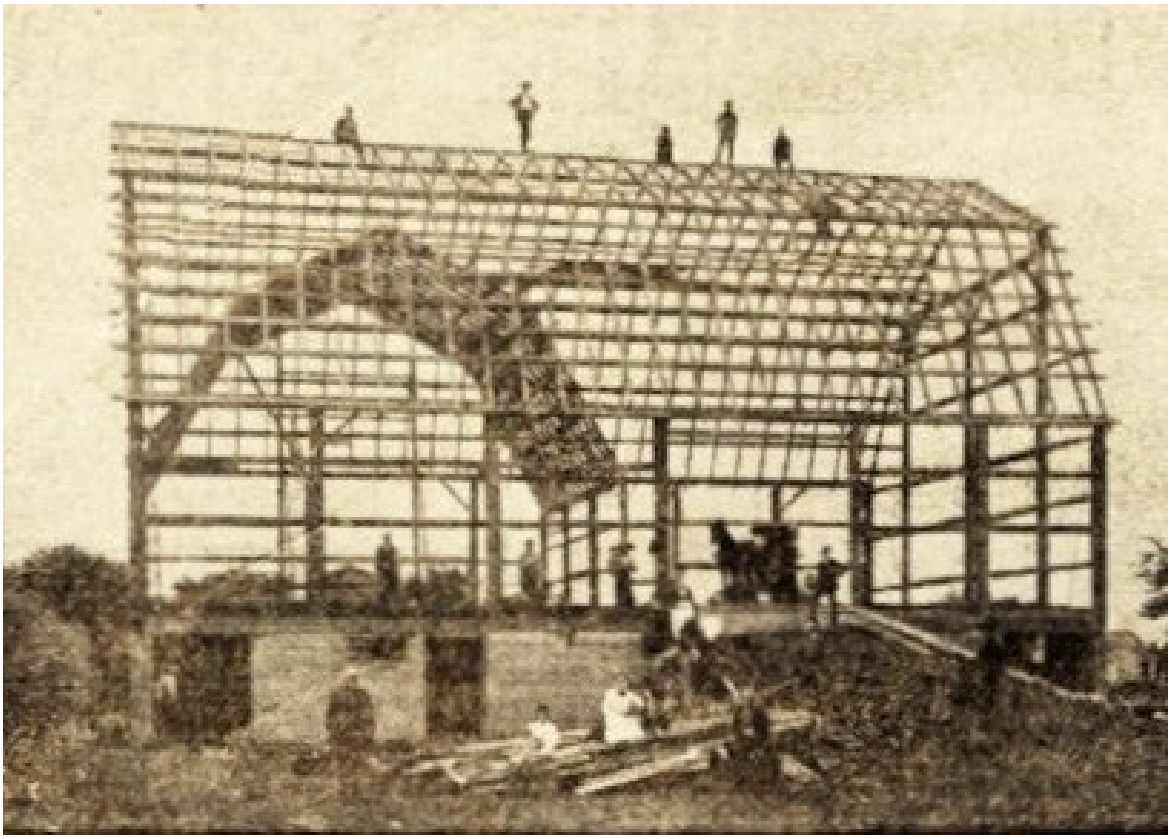
## Remembering Early Barns and the "Barn Raisings"

Historically, the barn is the backdrop of most Southwold farms. These barns belonged to Mungo McNabb, located on Lot 17, Concession 1, in the Township of Southwold. (Circa 1908)

**Photo: Elgin Heritage Centre**

As we drive along Southwold Township roads, sights of collapsed barns and silos from the 19th and early 20th centuries present us with a stark visual reminder of our vanishing rural heritage. It's difficult to imagine the architectural importance or the historical significance that these structures once played. Can we comprehend what our ancestors experienced in designing and building these massive wooden structures? Do we recognize the true social importance of the barn raising?

A barn was a necessary structure for any farmer, for storage of grain and hay, and sheltering animals. But a barn was a large and costly structure, which required more labour to build than a typical family could provide. A "barn raising" met the need by enlisting members of the community, unpaid, to assist in the building of their neighbour's barns. Anyone who helped could reasonably presume reciprocation would occur when they required comparable assistance.



**Barn raising for Charles Burgar, Fingal. (Circa 1908) Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

At a "barn raising" for Charles Burgar in May 1908, much of the neighbouring community showed up to assist. The St. Thomas Daily Times identified the men who did the construction and the women who prepared the hearty meals.

More than one hundred people from Southwold and area were present to assist and witness the raising of the new structure.

Familiar Southwold names included: Hunter, Jones, McLean, Jackson, Campbell, Carmichael, Lethbridge, Meek, Teetzel, Harris, Henderson, Kimble, Palmer, Culver, Cron, Munro, Ferguson, Auckland, Glover, Moore, Dewar and Plain.

The construction of barns was a complete community event, involving women and children in addition to men. While the men completed the work necessary to assemble the barn's framework, women were working diligently to prepare food for the workers. Family members were all invited to the feast, and often a dance was held on the floor of the new barn at the end of the day.

From the pioneer period, through to our current times, the technical and economic changes that occurred in the evolution of agriculture are reflected in the different forms and functions of barns. Because of this, barns have a special significance as symbols of an earlier way of life. They can be considered as large artifacts which reveal much about the farming operations they were built to accommodate.

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The 1871 Canada Census recorded that the average Canadian farmer raised four hogs, seven head of cattle and planted thirty-three acres of crops. No doubt, Southwold farms were probably in line with the national average for the era.

As the 19th Century came to a conclusion, Southwold agriculture had established its roots deeply in the township and was prospering.

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## 20th Century Southwold


**Southwold threshing bee near Shedden (circa 1915) Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

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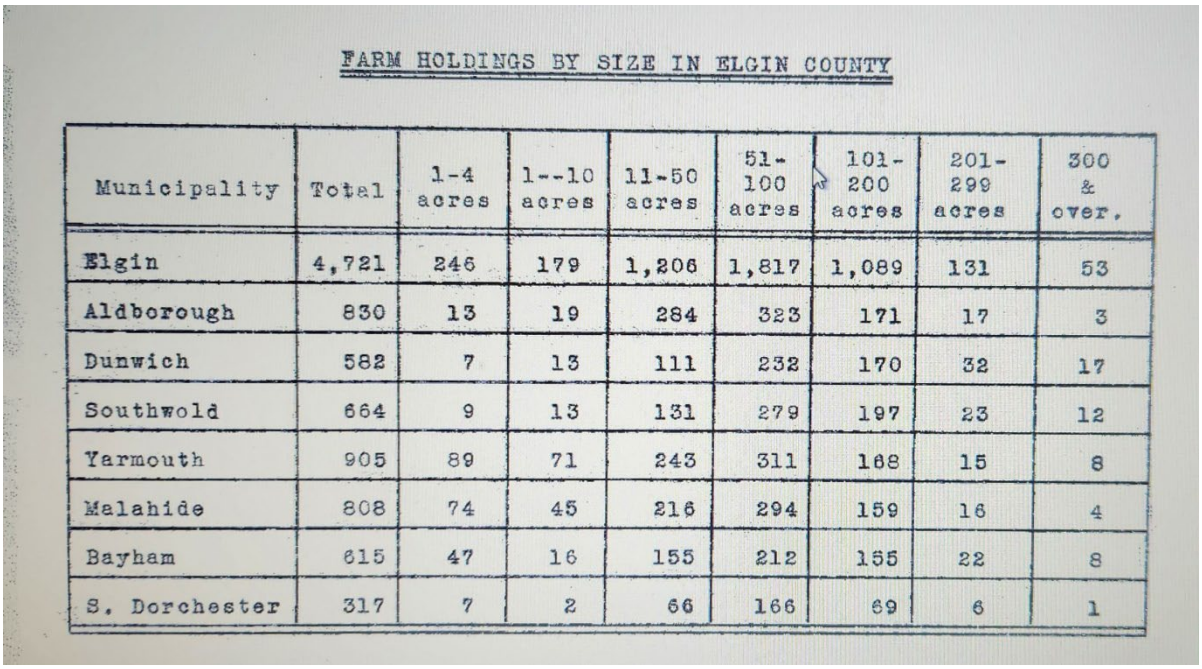
The 20th century saw significant advancements in livestock farming. Improved breeding techniques, veterinary care, and feed quality led to higher productivity. Dairy farming became a prominent industry, with milk being supplied to local creameries and cheese factories. Beef cattle farming also grew, supported by organizations like the Ontario Beef Producers' Association, which had ties to Southwold through figures like Stewart A. Brown.

Poultry farming expanded, with eggs and meat becoming important commodities. Swine production also increased, driven by advancements in housing and feeding systems. Livestock exhibitions and fairs, such as those organized by the Shedden Agricultural Society, showcased the township's achievements in animal husbandry.

"*Elgin County is in the forty-second parallel of latitude and has a growing season of 196 days. The snow fall is generally light and there is an average rain fall of 26inches per annum*".

**Agricultural Analysis of Elgin County** (1930)

An analysis of the 1921 Census reported how the number and size of Southwold farms compared with the other municipalities in the county.



FARM HOLDINGS BY SIZE IN ELGIN COUNTY

| Municipality | Total | 1-4 acres | 1--10 acres | 11-50 acres | 51-100 acres | 101-200 acres | 201-299 acres | 300 & over. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elgin | 4,721 | 246 | 179 | 1,206 | 1,817 | 1,089 | 131 | 53 |
| Aldborough | 830 | 13 | 19 | 284 | 323 | 171 | 17 | 3 |
| Dunwich | 582 | 7 | 13 | 111 | 232 | 170 | 32 | 17 |
| Southwold | 664 | 9 | 13 | 131 | 279 | 197 | 23 | 12 |
| Yarmouth | 905 | 89 | 71 | 243 | 311 | 188 | 15 | 8 |
| Malahide | 808 | 74 | 45 | 216 | 294 | 159 | 16 | 4 |
| Bayham | 615 | 47 | 16 | 155 | 212 | 155 | 22 | 8 |
| S. Dorchester | 317 | 7 | 2 | 66 | 166 | 69 | 6 | 1 |

Source: **Agricultural Analysis of Elgin County (1930)**, Elgin County Archives.

Farming in Elgin County was diversified in the early twentieth century.

Southwold farms were active in the harvests of fall wheat, barley, oats, husking corn, mixed grains, hay, corn for forage, potatoes and beans.

Most Southwold farms milked cows for their own family consumption. Dairy farms also produced milk and cream that kept the local cheese and butter production busy. Milk was frequently sent to dairies in St. Thomas and Aylmer.


**Driver Wilfrid Fife collecting farmer's cream in Talbotville circa 1919.**
**Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

Southwold beekeepers produced local honey. Maple syrup was also produced in Southwold. Many families had their own sugar bush operations to supply family needs and to share with neighbours.

Southwold devoted large areas to the production of tree fruits, chiefly apples and peaches. The southern end of the township closest to Lake Erie was particularly suited for orchards and tender fruits.

**Harvest time at the Axford family peach orchard, West River Road, Southwold Township, ca. 1938. (*left to right*): unidentified, Harry Frederick Axford, Ronald Stuart Axford and Ella Elizabeth Axford.** **Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

## Transportation Routes Affecting Southwold Agriculture

The **Agricultural Analysis of Elgin County (1930)** wrote that transportation routes through Elgin County were making it possible for local farms in Southwold to take advantage of principal roads for moving their equipment, livestock and farm products.

*"The King's Highway #3 runs directly through the county from east to west, while Highway #4, although just paved from London to St. Thomas, at the present time, is being completed in 1931. This will, when completed make it possible for every farmer in the county, with the exception of a few in the south of Bayham, to reach a Provincial Highway within ten miles of home."*

Situated in the centre of Elgin County, the keystone township of Southwold had ideal access to these roads.

The railway hub in St. Thomas further allowed access to international markets from Detroit to Buffalo, as well as extended markets in southern Ontario.


**Iona Station Railway Depot Photos; Elgin Heritage Archives**

Middlemarch, Shedden, Iona, Southwold and Lawrence Station were each busy railway stops in Southwold.

*"Excellent facilities are provided at practically every station in the county for the shipment of livestock and other county produce."*

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## Motor Vehicle Influences

The introduction of motorized vehicles in the early 20th century revolutionized agriculture in Elgin County and Southwold Township, transforming farming practices and boosting productivity.

Tractors replaced animal-drawn plows, harrows, and other equipment, significantly reducing the time and labor required for fieldwork. This improved efficiency allowed farmers to cultivate larger areas of land and improve yields.


August 10, 1948: An operator combines the largest field of rye (85 acres) in Southwestern Ontario. The activity took place on the farm of R. H. Timewell, west of Fingal.

**Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

Trucks enabled faster and more efficient transportation of crops, livestock, and supplies. Farmers could now access markets more easily, ensuring fresher produce and better prices.

Motorized vehicles facilitated the delivery of essential resources like fertilizers, seeds, and machinery parts, supporting the modernization of farming practices.

Improved transportation improved community connectivity allowing farmers to participate in agricultural fairs, cooperative meetings, and other community events, fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

These advancements not only enhanced agricultural productivity but also contributed to the economic and social development of the region.

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## Communication Advancements

By the early 20th century, many Southwold homes had access to electricity, telephones and radios.

Electricity, telephones, and radios revolutionized life for Southwold farm families in the early 20th century, bringing modern conveniences and connectivity to rural areas.

The introduction of electricity, particularly after the establishment of rural electrification programs in the 1930s, transformed farm life. It powered essential equipment like milking machines and water pumps, reducing manual labor and increasing efficiency. Electric lighting extended working hours and improved living conditions, while appliances like refrigerators helped preserve food, enhancing daily life.

**John Milton worked for several years as a linesman for the Southwold and Dunwich Telephone Company. Photo: Elgin Heritage Centre**

Telephones connected farm families to neighbours, markets, and emergency services, fostering a sense of community and improving communication. Early rural telephone systems often relied on party lines, where multiple households shared a single line. Despite their limitations, these systems were vital for coordinating agricultural activities and staying informed about local events.

**On October 30, 1941, an American Airlines DC3 crashed in the oat field in front of the Thompson and Viola Howe farm house near Lawrence Station. For several days, the telephone in the Howe family kitchen kept the world informed on details of the disaster that claimed 20 victims! Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

Radios became a lifeline for rural families, providing news, weather forecasts and entertainment. They helped farmers stay updated on market prices and agricultural developments, while also offering a connection to the broader world. Radios brought families together, creating shared experiences through programs and music.

**RCA Victor A23 Radio**
https://www.communitystories.ca

In 1929, CFCO Radio in Chatham started broadcasting programs like the "Home and Farm Hour," which provided weather updates, market reports, and farming advice tailored to rural audiences. CFPL Radio, based in London, Ontario, was a trusted voice for rural communities. It aired farm reports and agricultural news tailored to the needs of local farmers.

These technologies collectively modernized rural life, making farming more efficient and connecting Southwold families to the wider community.

## Agricultural Organizations

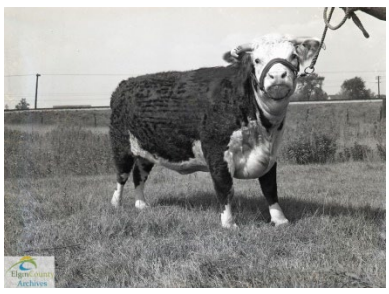
Life on the farm can be very isolated, and for that reason communities have always provided a vital source of support. As farming communities began to develop in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, groups and events became a vital part of rural life.

In 1792, the first Agricultural Society was formed in Niagara-on-the-Lake (at that time it was called "Newark"), and this began a tradition of organizations devoted to improving agricultural life.

A major activity of these groups was the annual and semi-annual fairs and exhibitions. Whether bringing people from across the road or across the province together, fairs allowed people to share their experiences and knowledge and to feel part of a larger whole.

Southwold's first Agricultural Fair held was held at Iona in 1854. It was a shared venture sponsored by the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society. In 1922, the fair moved to Shedden and occupied two different locations over a period of years before moving to its existing site in 1954. Shedden Fair events showcased local farming practices, livestock, and crafts, fostering community spirit and promoting agriculture.

*(**Note**: The Southwold 175 History celebration will expand on Shedden Fair as the featured August topic.)*


**Images from 1946 Shedden Fair. Photos: Elgin Heritage Archives**

The acceptance of local fairs proved very popular and other agricultural influences also began to form.

In the early 20th century, agricultural education and support groups played a pivotal role in shaping farming practices and community life in Southwold Township. These initiatives aimed to modernize agriculture, improve productivity, and foster a sense of collaboration among farmers.

Agricultural education introduced scientific methods and innovations to local farmers, helping them adapt to changing technologies and market demands. Programs often focused on crop rotation, soil conservation, and the use of fertilizers, which were critical for sustainable farming. Schools and agricultural societies organized workshops, demonstrations, and fairs to disseminate knowledge and showcase advancements.

Support groups, such as agricultural societies and cooperatives, provided a platform for farmers to share experiences, access resources, and advocate for their interests. These groups often organized events like plowing matches and livestock exhibitions, which not only promoted best practices but also strengthened community bonds.

Together, these efforts contributed to the professionalization of farming in Southwold, ensuring that agriculture remained a cornerstone of the township's economy and culture.


**West Elgin Women's Institute** held its 60th district annual meeting.

(*left to right*) Mrs. J. Robinson Futcher, Mrs. Charles Cooper, Miss Margaret Lyle, Mrs. Roy McNeil, Mrs. E. S. Down, Mrs. Neil Nickleson, Mrs. George Silcox, Mrs. J. D. Galbraith, Mrs. Herbert Parks, Mrs. Vermont Pow and Mrs. Morley Blewett. (Circa 1968) **Photo: Elgin Heritage Centre**

**Women's Institute** groups in Southwold Township have been instrumental in fostering community development and preserving local history. Established in the early 20th century, these groups provided a platform for women to engage in social, educational, and charitable activities. They played a key role in advocating for rural women's rights and improving living conditions in the township.

Women's Institute groups also organized events, supported local initiatives, and contributed to the cultural and social fabric of Southwold. Their efforts have left a lasting legacy, highlighting the importance of community collaboration and historical preservation.

One notable contribution is the creation of **Tweedsmuir Histories**, which document the township's heritage, including family histories, pioneer stories, and community events. These records serve as valuable resources for understanding Southwold's past and the role of women in shaping its identity.

**Tweedsmuir Community History Book** collections have been meticulously prepared and preserved. The Elgin County Archives have been enriched by Southwold women who have preserved local community history for over 100 years.


**St. Thomas Times-Journal, October 11, 1968**

Middlemarch Women's Institute marked its 50th anniversary. The meeting was held in Middlemarch Hall. (left to right) Mrs. Kenneth Butler, Mrs. William G. Lyle, Miss Margaret Lyle, Mrs. Alex Lyle, all of RR1, St. Thomas; Mrs. Frank Joiner, Port Stanley.

# Southwold Women's Institute Clubs

## (Including some of the women who served)

### Boxall 1941-2018

Mrs. Herb Jackson 1965 – 1968
Mrs. L.H. Brown 1923 – 1925

### Iona Station 1928 -1991

Mrs. Russell Kerr 1949 – 1951
Mrs. J.D. Galbraith 1959 – 1961
Mrs. Garnet Cowell 1980 – 1982
Mrs. Ivan Beecroft 1984 – 1986

### Paynes Mill 1946 - 2009

Mrs. Vermont Pow 1963 - 1965

### Shedden 1913- 2014

Miss L. Sells 1916 – 1917
Mrs. J.H. Sells 1925 - 1927
Mrs. G Silcox 1947 - 1949
Mrs. E.S. Down 1961 - 1963
Mrs. Ralph Palmer 1982 - 1984

### Iona 1909 - 1989

Mrs. D. Brown 1911 - 1912
Mrs. Ann McLean 1995 – 1997

### Middlemarch 1918 - still active

Miss M.K. Lyle 1935 - 1937
Mrs. J.R. Futcher 1941 - 1943
Mrs. S. Lyle 1953 - 1955
Mrs. Harold Butler 1968 - 1971
Mrs. Mary Clutterbuck 2019 - 2025

### River Road 1921 - 2011

Mrs. Elias Reck 1975 - 1977

### Talbotville 1927 - 1966

Mrs. A. McKellar 1943 – 1945

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### Kensington Club Lawrence Station

### 1909 – Still active

Shirley Longhurst, Alice Plain,
Dora McArthur, Doris McNaughton
Alma Guest, Edna Howe, Pat Oldham

## 4H Clubs

The first **Boys' and Girls' Club** in Ontario was formed in 1915 by a Waterloo District Representative. The vision for these groups was to enrich rural life through the education of children, with an ultimate goal of fostering an understanding and love of agriculture that would be brought back to the community. In 1952, the name of these groups was changed to 4-H to better represent the essence of the organization, as expressed in the pledge:

**My Head to clearer thinking**
**My Heart to greater loyalty**
**My Hands to larger service**
**My Health to better living**

These clubs were active in Elgin County, including Southwold, and focused on youth development through hands-on learning in areas like agriculture, leadership, and life skills. They provided opportunities for young people to engage in projects, competitions, and community service.

Elgin County 4H Clubs remain available for Southwold participants.

## Junior Farmers:

The Junior Farmers' Association of Ontario (JFAO), which oversees Junior Farmers programs, was officially formed in 1914. Southwold farmers participated in these programs as they expanded across Ontario during the early 20th century. Junior Farmers programs focused on agricultural education, leadership development, and community engagement, making them a valuable resource for rural areas like Southwold.

JFAO provides opportunities for young people age 15-29 of all backgrounds, but especially those in rural Ontario, to take on the challenge of exploring their individual talents and potential to develop personally while being involved in bettering their communities, networking, and having fun. JFAO's mission is "To build rural leaders through personal growth, travel, experiences, and community betterment.

In 2025, there are volunteers attempting to establish Junior Farmer programs for Southwold young people.

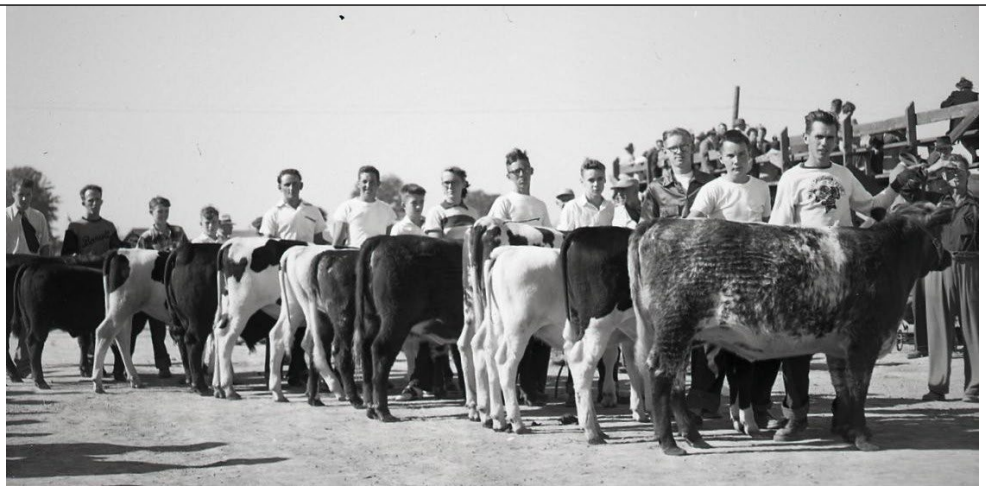

The 1967 annual meeting of the Elgin County Junior Farmers Association was held in the Wallacetown Community Hall. Discussing the agenda are, left to right, Linda Gosnell, Iona Station; Valerie Shore, RR 6, St. Thomas, 1968 vice-president of the Junior Institute; Keith Bawden, RR 7, St. Thomas, 1968 president of the Elgin Junior Farmers; Bill Cron, Fingal, 1968 treasurer for Junior Farmers; and Larry Jenner, RR 2, Port Stanley, past president of the Elgin County Junior Farmers Association."

# Southwold Youth Farmers

# Achievement and Awards


**The Calf Club**, sponsored by the Southwold Agricultural Society, made a good showing at the 1947 Shedden Fair. Left to right in the picture are: Kneeling - John Curtis, R.R.1, St. Thomas; Jack Killins, R.R.1, Southwold Station; Allen Armstrong, R.R.1, Union; Jim McGregor, R.R.1, Union. Back row - James F. Oldham, president of the Fair Board; Keith Howe, Southwold Station; Stewart Brown, Shedden; John Smith, Iona Station; Clare Oldham, Southwold Station; Carl Chamberlain, R.R. 1, Southwold; Ron Shelley, R.R.1, Union; Clarence Brown, R.R.7, St. Thomas; George Smith, Iona Station; Bruce Campbell, Iona Station; Russ Monteith, R.R.1, St. Thomas; Frank Webster, assistant agricultural representative. In this group Jim McGregor's entry was awarded grand champion junior heifer, and Jack Killins' entry was awarded grand champion steer. Both boys are shown with their winning calves." **Photo: Elgin County Archives**


**The Swine Club**, sponsored by the Southwold Agricultural Society, made a good showing at the **1947 Shedden Fair**. Left to right: Sitting - George Smith, Iona Station; Bruce Campbell, Iona Station (showed second); John Smith, Iona Station; Norm McDowell, Payne's Mills. Standing - Wesley Ross, secretary Shedden Fair and club leader; Roy Oldham, Southwold Station (showed third); Jack Killins, Southwold Station; Keith Howe, Southwold Station; Clare Oldham, Southwold Station (showed first); Stewart Brown, Shedden; Jeston Moore, Shedden." **Photo: Elgin County Archives**



A highlight at the **1952 Shedden Fair** was the showing made by the **Shedden 4-H Calf Club**. From right to left in the order of final standing are Ronald Shelley, R.R. 1, Union; William Carroll, R.R. 3, Iona Station; David Turner, R.R. 4, Iona Station; Mack McLaughlin, R.R. 1, Southwold Station; Kenneth Howe, R.R. 1, Lawrence Station; Mary Ruth Howe, R.R. 1, Southwold Station; John Agar, R.R. 4, Iona Station; Douglas Lyle, R.R. 1, St. Thomas; Donald Shiell, R.R. 7, St. Thomas; Wayne Whalls, R.R. 2, Shedden; Wesley Stafford, R.R. 2, Shedden; Bruce Stafford, R.R. 2, Shedden. Paul Jones, R.R. 1, Port Stanley, who placed thirteenth, was not present for the picture." **Photo: Elgin County Archives**


**Top Awards** - Awards for outstanding achievements in 4-H Club work were presented at the annual Kiwanis Elgin County 4-H banquet in 1968. Southwold boasted two big awards as Bill Brokenshire (*second from right*), highest points winner in the dairy calf clubs; and David House (*right)*, winner of a silver tray for highest aggregate score in all Elgin clubs were honoured.

**Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**


The annual **4-H Achievement Night in 1973** was held in the Shedden Country Club. The young people named as outstanding members in each of the five 4-H clubs represented at the achievement night (*left – right*): Harold House, Central Elgin Swine Club; Janet Lyle, Shedden Dairy Calf Club; Becky Smith, Shedden Beef Calf Club; Liz Garraway, Southwold Horsemanship Club and John Lyle, Southwold Field Crops Club."

**Photo: Elgin County Archives**

# Southwold Agriculture During War Time

During the two World Wars, Southwold Township's agriculture faced significant challenges but also demonstrated resilience and adaptability.

## World War I (1914–1918)

Many young men from Southwold enlisted, leaving farms short-staffed. Women, children, and older family members stepped in to maintain operations.

The war effort required large quantities of food, leading to increased demand for crops and livestock. Farmers worked tirelessly to meet these needs, often under difficult conditions.

A WI Tweedsmuir account of the history of Middlemarch prepared by Mrs. Tyrell Begg in 1947 describes some of the activity at the local train station:

"*During World War I many farmers shipped milk to Windsor every morning. Large numbers of cattle also were shipped from this point. The late Mr. Charlie Jackson, a drover, shipped as many as 17 carloads in a single day. This was in 1917 and they were billed for France".*
*Other produce shipped out were wheat, sheep and hogs. Sugar Beets were and still are shipped*."

The need for efficiency during World War I spurred the adoption of new farming techniques and machinery, laying the groundwork for future advancements.

## World War II (1939–1945)

By the time of the Second World War, mechanized equipment like tractors had become more common, helping to offset labor shortages caused by enlistment.

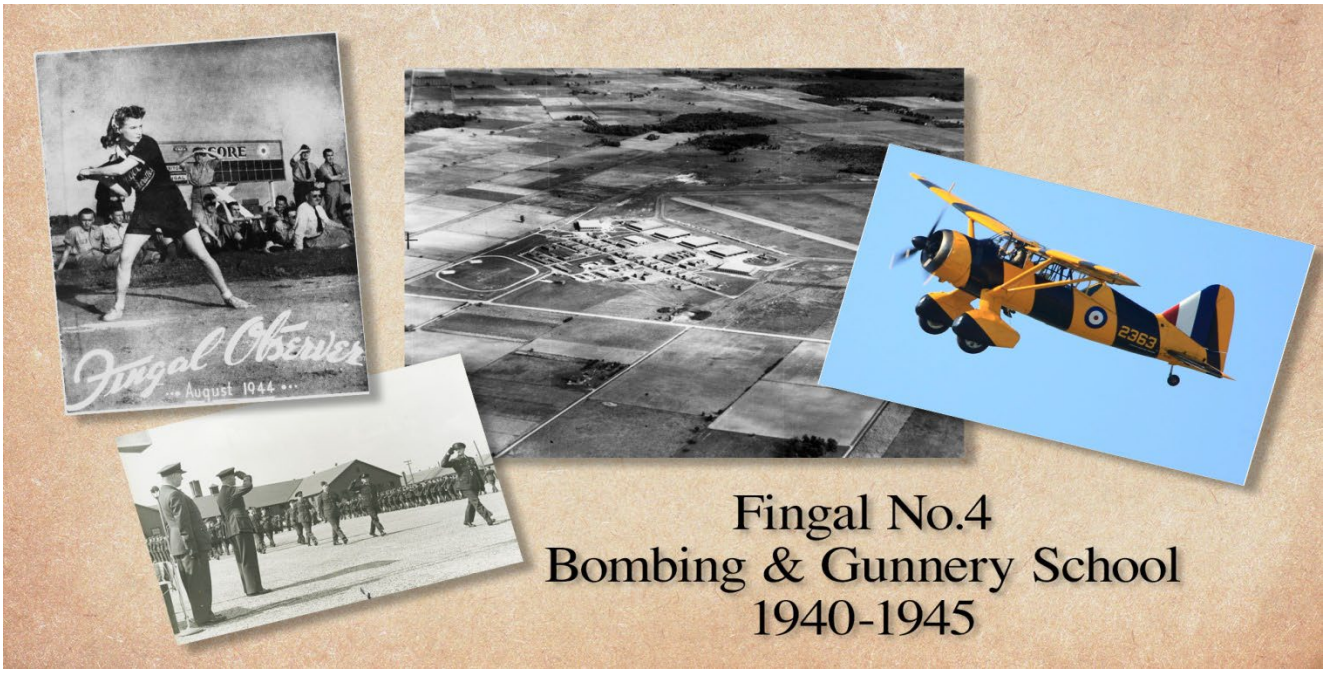
Initiatives like the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, which had a base in Southwold, brought economic activity to the area, indirectly supporting local agriculture.

Farmers across Canada participated in programs to increase food production, such as the "Victory Gardens" initiative, which encouraged efficient use of land for growing essential crops.

Despite the hardships, Southwold's agricultural community played a vital role in supporting the war effort, contributing to both local and national food supplies.


**Photos: Elgin Heritage Archives: Montage by Tony Paul**

## RCAF Fingal Station No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School




**Photos: Elgin Heritage Archives: Montage by Tony Paul**

When the RCAF Fingal No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School was made part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in 1940, 724 acres of Southwold farm land was procured to build the base.

In February 1940, Boxall area farmer Frank House sold 70 acres of farm land to His Majesty the King and the right of the Dominion of Canada, for $5,800 ($83 per acre)! Several other area farms made similar transactions with King and Country.

Southwold farm boys also signed up to aid in construction of the facility. Two of these young men, William Crabe of Fingal and Franklin Small of Shedden joined the construction team. Both men later signed on with the RCAF and served overseas.

Bill Crabe was later awarded the RCAF Conspicuous Gallantry Medal for an act of heroism in action. Franklin Small completed a full tour (31 bombing trips) as an RCAF Avro Lancaster bomber pilot!

**Bill Crabe CGM**

**Franklin Small**

Possibly influenced by RCAF Fingal, seventy-six men, many off Southwold family farms, served the RCAF in WWII. Eight Southwold men in the RCAF were killed in action.

Nineteen airmen from No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School died in training accidents including some who crashed into Southwold farm fields.

## Camp 10 - Fingal

During World War II, in total, from 1940 to 1946, more than 37,000 German and Italian war prisoners were imprisoned in Canada, distributed over about 30 camps, guarded by the national defense branch

of the Royal Canadian Army. Some of these POWs were allowed to work in the communities where they were detained.

The program allowing POW labour during wartime was deemed successful and following the war, 1945 – 1946 the Department of Labour establish temporary farm hostels at Centralia, Glencoe, and Fingal.

Fingal's former RCAF Base was turned into a hostel and modified to house "enemy merchant seamen, civilian internees, and combatant other ranks".

When Camp 10 (Fingal) opened in November 1945, staff immediately began placing POWs – all hand-picked non-combatants to ensure they were not security risks – on individual farms. These POWs lived with the farmers and their families and worked as general farm hands. Fingal also served as the administrative centre for POWs working from the POW farm hostels at Glencoe, Centralia, and Chatham.

One of the farms who utilized the opportunity in the summer of 1946 was the Frank House family who, in 1940, sold land to the Canadian Government to build the air base. On July 19 (5 men) and again on July 26, German POWs (10) worked on the House Farm. They were paid 35 cents per hour.

At many of the farms using this labour service, the Germans did not receive warm receptions. However, Lillian House made sure that wasn't the case at the House farm. The meals she served the men were very hearty and much appreciated. Apparently, after lunch, her husband Frank wasn't able to keep up the pace with the grateful work crew! At the end of 1946, the Canadian Government began shipping most of the POW labourers back to their homelands. Many remained in contact with their Southwold farm families long after they returned home.

## Summary of 1900 – 1950

The dramatic changes in Southwold farm life over the first fifty years of the 20th Century are best summarized in the Middlemarch Women's Institute Tweedsmuir Book prepared by Mrs. Begg;

"*The uses of electricity have increased at such a rapid pace that now much of our work is made lighter by it. We have stoves, irons, toasters, vacuum cleaners, agitator washing and sewing machines, radios, fireplaces, water heaters, (floor) polishers and many other appliances in our houses.*

*Hydro also goes to the barn where it is used for separating and cooling milk, as well as milking the cows and for pumping water. Many farmers also have their own grain grinders.*

*The transportation of our livestock and produce to market was much different years ago. Most of it was by Pere Marquette Railway.*

*The Railway came through Middlemarch in 1900. A station house and the stock were also built in 1900.*

*Cattle, salt and later fertilizer were the main things shipped in.*

*Trucks and tractors now do practically all the hauling of livestock and grain. Tractors have taken the place of the steam engine for threshing and buzzing wood and of the horse for much of the farm work. All of the early tractors were of steel."*


**The Albert Andrews family haying on their family farm. Circa 1938**
**Photo: Richard Andrews**


By the middle of the 20th Century, Southwold farms were mechanized and women were actively participating in the harvests! **Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

## Sugar Beets in Southwold

Sugar beets played a significant role in Southwold agriculture during the mid-20th century, particularly as part of Ontario's broader sugar beet industry. Farmers cultivated sugar beets to supply processing facilities, such as the sugar refinery in Chatham, Ontario. This crop was valued for its contribution to the production of sugar and its adaptability to the region's climate and soil conditions.

However, the prominence of sugar beet farming began to decline in the latter half of the century due to changes in market demand, competition from imported sugar, and shifts in agricultural practices. By the late 20th century, sugar beet farming had largely diminished in Southwold and surrounding areas.


**April 14, 1951:** Officials of the Canada and Dominion Sugar Company announced to a group of key sugar beet growers that a mechanical dump was to be installed on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway siding at Middlemarch.


**Southwold Sugar Beet Growers** (front l to r): Ivan Lee, Fingal; Robert Dowler, Middlemarch; William Glover, Fingal and Robert Brokenshire, (back row third from left) a Talbotville area producer pose in 1951 with representatives of the Dominion Canada Sugar Beet Company. **Photo: Elgin County Archives**

## Tobacco Production

Flue-cured tobacco began to be cultivated in Elgin County, including Southwold Township, around 1925. This type of tobacco thrived specifically in sandy soils and favourable climate. It became a significant crop, especially after World War II, when demand for cigarettes surged.

Area farms on Routh Road, near Lawrence Station and in the south of the township, closer to Port Stanley grew much of the tobacco crops in Southwold.

Summer employment opportunities in tobacco fields and harvest "tying tables" were in great demand on Southwold farms from the late 1940s to 1970s.


Twelve new kilns were in various stages of completion on the Faulkner-Barendregt farm, Union Road, Southwold. Flue-cured tobacco was growing where beef cattle ranged a year or before. (Circa 1946) **Photos: Elgin Heritage Archives**


Maxine Reid hands a jar of water to her brother, 19-year-old Arnold Reid, on the Faulkner-Barendregt farm, Union Road, Southwold. Arnold was giving a back field of flue-cured its final application of arsenate of lead. His job called for the driving of the horses and operating the pump handle. (Circa 1946)

**Photo: Elgin Heritage Archives**

The Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board was established in 1959. They established three warehouses in Tillsonburg, Delhi and Aylmer at which tobacco would be auctioned to buyers using the Dutch Clock system. This replaced the old method of buyers purchasing directly from the farmers at their barns.

By the late 20th century, tobacco farming in the area started to decline due to changing market demands, health concerns, and government regulations. By the early 21st century, tobacco farming had largely diminished in Southwold.

## Farm Art


A miniature wooden replica of the Southwold Railway Station, a team of horses and miscellaneous farm buildings was carved by the late Jack Boughner.

**Composite photo created and photographed by Tony Paul.**

Life on the farm wasn't all work for Jack Boughner of Southwold. While he certainly experienced the hard work and long hours of growing cash crops and managing livestock, his lifelong passion for woodworking created his favourite pastime.

Boughner fashioned childhood memories through his carving skills to create miniature wooden replicas of important landmark buildings, animals and typical farm images. Among Boughner's collection were the pioneer homestead at which he had lived as a child, as well as of the church and the school he had attended.

Always willing to display his work to guests at his home or inquisitive patrons at local farm events and historical shows, Boughner left a legacy of Southwold agricultural history to his family when he passed, in 1990.


**Carving History** - Jack Boughner of Southwold Township shows Morley Winter of Union and son Jason one of the carvings he's made over the years on his farm. Mr. Boughner has captured memories of early farm life and history in the settings he's created from his carvings. Circa 1981

## The Last 75 Years: 1950 - 2025

**Southwold Agriculture Discussion**

*(Seated left – right)* Steve Jones, Michelle Hoffsuemmer, Perry Clutterbuck, Jim Boughner, Karen Collard and Karen Auckland

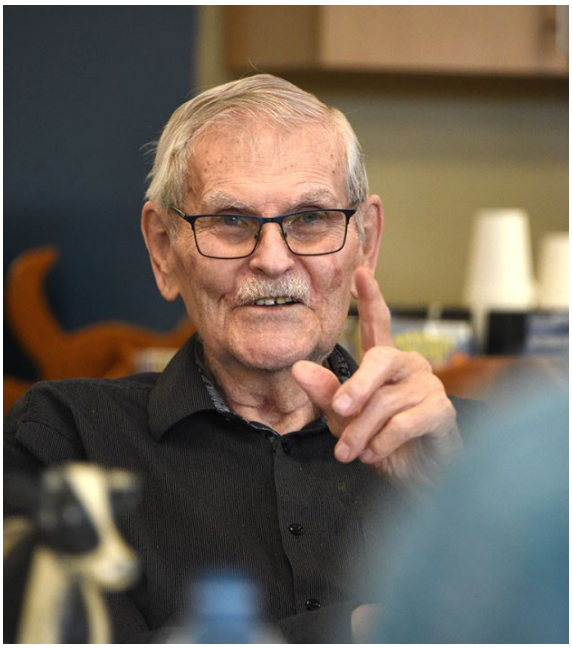
*(Standing left – right)* Ron Lackey, Gerry Goodhue, Richard Andrews, Justin Pennings, Jim Dodd, Len Lynch, Gerald Boughner, Ken Dodd, Nick Doelman, Janice Fisher, Ross Burgar, Sarah Emons

In order to reflect on the last seventy-five years of Southwold agriculture we did not have to consult community archives. Southwold has many resident farmers who lived that experience, in full or in part.

On March 28, 2025, we assembled sixteen area farmers at the Southwold Library in Shedden. The task was for them to share memories and experiences of their life on Southwold farms.

## What are your earliest memories of growing up on a farm?

**Perry Clutterbuck:** "I remember horses being used a little bit. But I do remember our first tractor was a 1020 International. And in 1940, we bought a John Deere 80, or my father did, not me, from Ernie Goodhue.



He (Ernie) was a John Deere dealer in the area. In 1941, we bought a 12A Combine. And that combined all over the place, pulled by a John Deere 'A' with steel wheels.

I rode around on that tractor by the time I was four or five.

My father actually put a seat by the right fender. So I couldn't fall off, but he was there. And I *wanted* to be there."

**Ken Dodd:** "I remember a threshing machine coming to my grandpa's farm, I think I'd be six or seven years old, and the thing was huge. Now you see them and they aren't that big compared to today's equipment."

**Karen Auckland:** "My earliest memory on the farm was riding on a load of loose hay with my grandfather with a team of horses coming up. I can still picture the reins going over the front rack and coming up to the barn. And I think we used the thrashing machine till I was 10 or 12. Yeah, and I think my sister Margaret and I, our job was when they brought the load of sheaves in and then had the horses pull it up into the barn. I think we had to sit on the barn hill and holler, whoa!

**Gerald Boughner:** "I remember we were fixing some machinery when I was quite young and my good brother (Jim) and Uncle Murray taught me how to chew tobacco. The next thing I know, I was over next to the fence, lying down. My mother came out of the house, and she was just furious."

**Perry Clutterbuck:** "I remember going to a place where they were threshing, and the women in the community all got together and cooked the dinners. You never had meals like that in your life! You'd get two pieces of pie when you started… more if you wanted."

**Steve Jones:** I remember having porridge and having, when we had the cows, you have the milk from the cows. We thought it was pretty good.

**Karen Collard:** I can remember my grandpa eating Kellogg's cornflakes and cream from, right off from the cow, right from the cow.

**Gerry Goodhue:** Talking about your cream, that's another thing that the Goodhue family did. They always bottled their milk, and the top of the bottle had the cream in it.

The horse and buggy used to take it down to Port and they sold all around Port Stanley. We still got some of the bottles, too. Then they'd bring (in the winter) big chunks of ice out of the lake. That's how they kept all their stuff cool.

**Janice Fisher:** I liked being barefoot on the farm. That's what I enjoyed in the summer… and the garden. I'm sure most farm families had a huge garden, which would be supplementing those big meals that you talked about. So the farm wife is normally canning and preserving and hoeing and weeding and busy in the garden. That's what I remember.

**Karen Collard:** I would say about those meals when I was little, helping with those meals when they were filling silo, they'd come up and every woman had her square metal laundry tubs on their stands and the men came through and washed their hands. And then, I can still see it yet. I've never seen so many flies in my life in one place as when they were filling silo!

**Richard Andrews:** We have a farm on Ron McNeil, and it was a dairy when I was growing up. Now we have some beef cattle, and sheep, and chickens, and mostly cash crop, a mixed farm, so a fair bit of hay, straw and pasture. I feel very privileged and lucky to have a good start from our parents. The Andrews family came from Holsworthy, Devon England in 1831. They settled our house that we live in now. It was built in 1884, and I guess there was a house where our garden is, a sort of a cabin really, and that's, but anyway, that's the history, and I hope it goes on for more generations.

My dad talked about threshing meals and he said there was a bit of a competition between the wives… who could put on the best meal. He

said, as he got older, he said, “I don't know how we ever went to work after those meals”.

I can remember my dad, you know, talking about the Clintons, the Gunnings and the Auckland’s, and you know, they all helped each other, and all worked together. I think we wouldn’t let a neighbor *not* finish, or if he needed some help, we would do it. Good feelings in the farm families,

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## Discuss the role of the women on the farm… from wives, mothers, to farm partners; working and sharing the load.

**Karen Collard:** It's come a long ways from riding a horse back to the barn with a hay loader with my dad. Hardy and I started out with one little tractor. When we started, he worked off the farm for a bit, in concrete. I'd do the night shift; he'd do the day shift. I'd work at night with the tractor and my little cultivator. Anyway, I'm still doing that, just a little bigger tractor these days.

**Karen Auckland:** When you talk about women's role with the meals, I'm sure my mother cooked meals too, but we grew up with my grandparents right next door, so we had two houses and a farm. My grandfather and my dad did the farming. Mom raised chickens and sold eggs, as well as the big garden and that was more her role. I think she helped out in the barn when needed.

**Richard Andrews:** My mom would go out and help milk in the morning and at night feed calves. Feeding calves was, seemed to be often what the women did and did a wonderful job at it.

**Jim Boughner:** One thing, years ago, whenever you've seen the women out in the field or in the garden or anything, they always wore dresses. That's changed a lot over the years.

**Karen Collard:** Yes, because my grandma would say she'd only wear pants for dress-up, you know. If you were going out for something, it was always a dress, with an apron.

**Michelle Hoffsuemmer:** Well, I'm sitting here knowing I would have been a terrible housewife. Farming is not my forte, and neither is gardening, so I don't think I would have been involved in that sense. But I think farming has evolved dramatically and with that I think everyone's roles, just regardless of gender, have changed quite a bit.

We live in quite a close-knit community and I have several friends with husbands who farm. Most women, I would say of the wives I know, have their own careers separate from the farm. For those who are active farming participants, their roles are very different. Some of them are strictly looking after the books or the accounting side of it.

Others actually will be in the fields looking after animals. It's definitely more of a partnership, I would say. More of a role dispersal between husband and wife, and more crossover between tasks.

My husband and I were different. My husband runs the farm, and I run the elevator, so our tasks are quite separate from each other. There is obviously overlap during planting and harvest.

Very early on, we decided that I would not be a good fit to be in a tractor. Just, also size, technology, it's not something I grew up with, and the learning curve is very steep.

Where I am now is a much better, and a much more natural fit for our family. So, I think there has been quite an evolution from simply providing meals, to actually being heavily involved in the decision making, and the finances of the farm.

**Gerry Goodhue:** Like my mother, she was always out in the barn and helped out. And my wife, she'd come from the city, but she always helped me. She'd run one tractor, and I'd run the other. We only had two.

## How did women deal with farming and raising kids?

**Karen Collard:** I didn't have to milk cows, but I always took the kids to the barn with me, no big deal. And there's not one of the kids that can't remember sleeping beside you in the tractor, or at the barn. Steve will probably remember the time he was in the barn, in a buggy, and the cow kicked at him and didn't get him!

These guys started really young, same as everybody started really young when you're on the farm, right? But you always did those things, you grew up with them and so it was just natural. I don't think our mothers molly coddled us like they do today. Oh gosh, you'll get hurt. If you fell out of a tree, it's your own dumbness, right?

## How has Farm Safety Improved?

(**Editor's Note:** There were many observations and stories of farm accidents which we decided not to include in this document. Instead, we offer an assessment that summarizes the issue of farm safety.)

**General Observation:** Farm safety has seen remarkable improvements over the past 75 years, driven by technological advancements, regulations, and increased awareness. Roll-Over Protective Structures (ROPS), seat belts, and Power Take-Off (PTO) shields have significantly reduced accidents.

Safety standards and training programs ensure farmers are educated about risks and proper equipment use.

Modern machinery now includes sensors, automatic shut-off systems, and GPS technology, enhancing precision and reducing operator fatigue.

The development of specialized protective clothing and equipment, such as gloves, helmets, and respirators, has minimized injuries and exposure to harmful substances.

These advancements have collectively made farming safer, though it remains a physically demanding and potentially hazardous occupation.

## Let's discuss the role education plays, from yesterday's traditional family farm to today's more specialized operations.

**Perry Clutterbuck:** I stayed home and farmed as soon as I graduated. My father couldn't work the farm anymore. He sat down and had a long talk one evening, and he says, if you want to own this farm someday, you're going to have to start right now. I said, "That's what I would like to do". So by the time I was 16, I practically took over everything.

**Nick Doelman:** … from people sitting in the barbershop talking about (farming)… to what we have now in Ridgetown, first week of January, Southwest (Agriculture Conference). Probably six or seven hundred farmers show up for that for two days.

I went to high school in St. Thomas, to the two-year program at University of Guelph, which is the same as Ridgetown and worked off-farm for two years, and came back farming.

**Jim Boughner:** I just carried on (from my dad). If it didn't work, he tried something else. That was kind of my dad's thing.

**Janice Fisher:** I'm curious, when did the Ridgetown programs and the Guelph programs start? Obviously, our parents' generation didn't go to (post-secondary education), like (they do today).

**Perry Clutterbuck:** I think I've been (taking courses) there for 30 years, at least.

**Steve Jones:** My Uncle Paul went there… I don't know what year he graduated but he's one near the first (year). I graduated 50 years ago. There were only 70 kids in my class when I graduated.

(**Editor's Note:** Ridgetown Agricultural College, originally known as the Western Ontario Agricultural School, was established in 1951. It later became Ridgetown College and eventually a campus of the University of Guelph in 1997. The campus has been a hub for agricultural education, research, and innovation in southwestern Ontario.)

**Michelle Hoffsuemmer:** A lot of people go to Guelph or to Ridgetown, and it's not necessarily because they want to farm. They end up working for Bayer or FCC or AgriCorps. Education now is ongoing.

There are always conferences… lots of farm management courses and groups and there's always something about technology or better implementation for all of the equipment that we use. I think it's never ending.

**Steve Jones:** Yeah, but when I graduated from Ridgetown, if you wanted an off-farm job, like working for a seed company or spray company, it was $8,000 a year you made in 1975.

**Jim Dodd:** Well, that'd be pretty good money there, $8,000!

**Karen Auckland:** When you're talking about online courses and education… was that more through the Ministry of Agriculture?

**Ron Lackey:** More likely through the Farmers Education Union

(**Editor's Note:** Ontario National Farmers Union, est. 1969).

**Karen Auckland:** OMAFRA has changed a lot to what it was years ago. We would get information from you (a rep) as opposed to online or some seed company setting it up.

**Ron Lackey:** I worked for the Ministry for 31 years, and so I went to a lot of night meetings, and they were mostly information meetings either beef or dairy or swine, whatever.

## What about land preparation? What's different now in how you started out planting a crop?

**Richard Andrews:** It was always fall plowing which worked well. Now, the plows don't come out of sheds anymore.

It's a big tillage; machines or chisel plows. And so that's one big difference, I guess. Maybe quite a bit more of a cover crop emphasis that is planted in the winter. I think most farms would have been mixed.

You always had some cattle, so there was always manure to spread. Now it's more fertilizers, pellet style and liquid fertilizers come into a big part of things too.

I can remember on our farm, well the home farm, which earlier was about 120 acres. I think there were at least 12 fields on that farm and a long laneway that went back to the woods. There were probably four or five pasture fields but fences around every field too.

We've got some clover on, I can remember, it would have been 30 years ago maybe, that it was all spread with a fiddle by hand. My dad would have the bags of clover at one end and kind of pace it off. So yeah, as you went around the field, you aim for a tree at that end, and my dad at this end, and tried to do about 20 feet or so.

I think everybody's very proud of the crops they grow. And back then the pride was there too, you know, and they really worked hard to get good crops.

**Gerry Goodhue:** Speaking of lining up with stuff… when my wife first started working on the farm, she always worked the ground, I said, just *line up* with something, and it's a nice straight line. One day I went back there, and it was just like a horseshoe. Did you line up with a seagull?

Nowadays, everything's GPS, straight as an arrow. Yeah, it does look nice.

**Jim Dodd:** And the yields changed a lot since, say, in the last 20 years.

**Ken Dodd:** What do you get now with an average crop of corn?

**Gerry Goodhue:** Well, if you don't get over 200, I think you'd be upset. I think we used to get 90 or something. I was working my way up on 90 to 100. We used to sell corn for; I sold a lot of corn for 90 cents a bush.

**Ross Burgar:** So what's the main reason for the higher yields today?

**Gerry Goodhue:** Well, we do so much more feeding that's better for life. It's better for genetics too. Genetics is a big thing. What the soil tests call for, we go by.

**Michelle Hoffsuemmer:** I do grain merchandising (Hoffsuemmer Grains). I think AgriCorps' average is 190 bushels per acre now for corn. And soybeans, let's say they're around 55.

**Karen Auckland:** Yeah, but many years ago we wouldn't have seen many soybeans growing around here when we had more of the mixed farm, right?

**Gerry Goodhue:** No, we've always grown soybeans, but you're likely right, maybe not as many.

**Steve Jones:** Not as much in the rotation.

**Gerry Goodhue:** But years ago, you know, if you got a 40 bushel crop of soybeans, you were happier than the top yield.

**Karen Auckland:** When you talk about growing soybeans, I think of riding on the drill and leveling it out to get the last out. But also the pink stuff that you put in there… by hand.

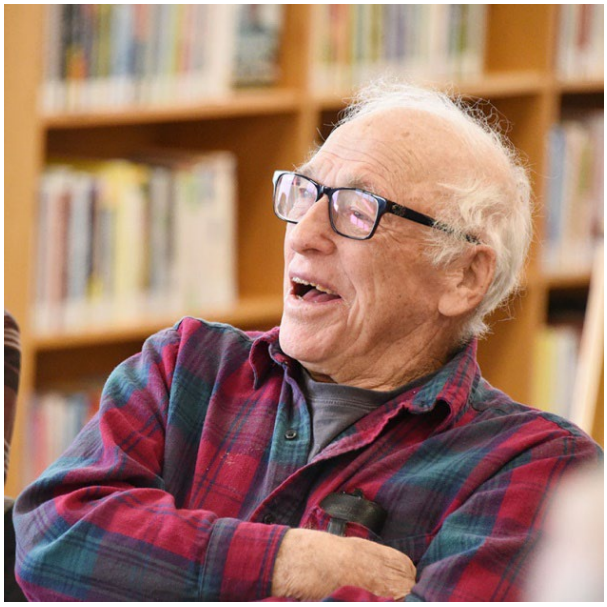
## What about digital technology?

**Nick Doelman:** Well, I think we have to look at general situations. As a young kid, we carried our milk. We would weigh it on a scale until we got out. Cows are ID by feet on the "cow computer". Record the temperature and the weight. You just go back and look it up. You can look it up what happened three days ago. You could enter medical histories of the animals individually and all the breeding days could be entered.

(**Editor's Note:** "Cows are ID by feet on the 'cow computer'" refers to a system used in precision livestock farming where technology identifies individual cows based on unique characteristics of their feet or gait.)

**Perry Clutterbuck:** Well, we had that for the beef cattle a long way back. I had a computer in 1983. We had all the livestock on there.

## Let's talk a little bit about markets and getting product to market; then and now.



**Jim Boughner:** Well, as far as Talbotville Stock Yards, there are no cattle around this area now. So I know Bob Lethbridge said one time, he should have bought up north someplace instead of buying down here because that's where there's cattle.

**Richard Andrews:** It was a busy place for many of them.

**Gerald Boughner:** The Elgin Co-Op? That's where I went after I left my public school. I went to high school and I realized I knew a lot more than the people at the high school.

**Jim Dodd:** I had a job at the (Elgin) Co-Op. I had to go back a few times.

**Richard Andrews:** And a great spot! The old mill, feed mill was great. And Louie Doan, he'd stay open all night. You wouldn't see that happen

now, I don't think. You could store your grain in the grain bank, they called it. They'd make feed out of the grain that was there. It was a very good facility.

**Perry Clutterbuck:** It was. We grew seed beans for them for 20 years.

**Gerry Goodhue:** My dad had the contract to keep the corn cobs. They did a lot of cobbed corn back in those days. We'd take the corn cobs over to Harvey's. My brother and I… that was our thing to do on the weekend it seemed like.

**Steve Jones:** I worked at the Dutton Co-Op after we finished Ridgetown in 76. That's just when they put the new addition on with those silos. Hugh Hunter and I unloaded hopper bottoms.

**Jim Boughner:** Did you ever use the scale at Port Stanley? One of the ships I trucked grain in there. I know I worked one year there for a week or two drawing wheat there.

## How is the product of Southwold farms utilized in the marketplace?

**Michelle Hoffsuemmer:** I would say most of the corn that's produced in our area goes to either Aylmer or Ethanol or Ingredion and they make high fructose corn syrup and sugars and that sort of thing. Some of it does go for export to either Sarnia or to Hamilton. Some of it ends up in feed for livestock and I don't know if anyone else sends their corn anywhere else. I think those would be the main outlets.

Roundup Ready Beans would go for export. Again for our area the primary outlets are Sarnia, the Cargill Sarnia or one of the buyers in Hamilton or they go for crush.

(**Editor's Note:** In the soybean industry, "crush" refers to the process of converting soybeans into two primary products: soybean meal and soybean oil.)

Soybean crush goes to either Bunge Limited (a food processing company) in Hamilton or ADM Windsor (Archer Daniels Midland facility).

Wheat, a lot of it in this area goes for export predominantly. Some of it would end up in feed. More in the north… like near Palmerston.

Really when you're looking at what we can resell grain for, you're going to go to the outlets that make sense from a freight cost. And for our area we're very lucky that we have the ethanol plant and Ingredion.

(**Editor's Note:** Ingredion is a global company specializing in food and beverage ingredients. It produces starches, sweeteners, plant-based proteins, and other solutions for industries like food, pharmaceuticals, and textiles).

Hamilton and Sarnia are feasible distance away for trucking.

**Ross Burgar:** Ultimately who's the end user for ethanol?

**Michelle Hoffsuemmer:** For ethanol, so this would be like fuel for your vehicles. It would be like your Petro-Canada's, your Shell's, that sort of thing.

As an industry eventually it's very likely that will become more for aviation fuel. But the demand for that is so much higher. It's exponentially higher than what it is for vehicles. And that industry right now is just not in Ontario. Specifically, is just not at that capacity yet to have that market there.

**Karen Auckland:** When you mentioned Crush, the end product of Crush Soybeans would be what?

**Michelle Hoffsuemmer:** For crush, it should be the Soybean oil. When we talk about biodiesel and the by-products would be soybean meal and whatnot, which would be more for feed. One of the by-products for Aylmer would be DDGs, which would go back into feed for livestock.

(**Editor's Note:** "DDGs" stands for Distillers Dried Grains. These are a co-product of the ethanol production process, primarily derived from corn and used as a high-protein animal feed ingredient. This offers nutritional benefits for livestock such as cattle, swine, and poultry.)

## Let's talk Dairy!

**Karen Auckland:** Well, when you think we grew up and we maybe had 25, 30 milk cows. We sent the milk to the dairy. Now, most farms that are milking cows have, what, a couple hundred?

**Ken Dodd:** My grandpa had 22 milk cows and took the milk to Silverwood's Dairy every month. And milk cans.

**Jim Boughner:** We used to take ours to Belmont… to Carnation.

**Richard Andrews:** I can remember my dad telling that they had to get the milk to St. Thomas City Dairy. They had a specialty, a premium for Guernsey gold, they called it.

My dad, that's what we milked for a long time and he said sometimes in the winter, there would be so much snow they couldn't get down the roads. So they'd cut the fences and put the cans on a cutter and horses and take them across the fields into town. The work that, they just accepted that was part of the job.

**Karen Auckland:** When I was a kid, our milk went to Silverwood's, but (some of the milk) in this area went to Windsor. John Keith took it to Windsor. Ours went to London, to Nielsen's beside the 401 for three years. Ice cream! After that, I think it was bought by Bluewater.

The milk goes to, if you're buying it in the store, Sealtest, Gay Lea, and the local one, there's also now Hewitt Dairy and that's in Hagersville. Misty Glen is Belmont and Walker Dairy Farms is Aylmer. And, if you want to pay two dollars and something more a litre, go right ahead. I don't, I won't say it's that much better, okay.

**Nick Doelman:** So, just a clarification on milk. After the milk board came in in 1965, one day your milk might go to Toronto and the next day it might have gone to London.

**Ross Burgar:** You were dealing with the board, whereas previous to that, you'd have a contract with a certain dairy?

**Nick Doelman:** You'd have a contract, yeah. Yeah, and we were at Silverwood's in St. Thomas. At one point before the milk board came in, if you had a contract for so many pounds of milk per day and you shipped more than that, you had to find another processor. So at one

time we were shipping to *two* processors, to Carnation and to Silverwood's, because we couldn't ship the excess to Silverwood's without paying the penalty.

**Karen Collard:** Most of ours now is Guelph, Georgetown. But those two, Guelph and Georgetown, the guys go every day to Guelph.

**Steve Jones:** And how we cooled it was a 45-gallon barrel. Cut the top off and we bailed water from the well, which was right there, and cooled it, just the cold water. That's why we got out of dairy.

**Ross Burgar:** Steve, on the topic of keeping the milk cool, Ron sent me an interesting article just this morning. But the article was written and published in 1920. It's called Practical Methods of Cooling Milk on the Farm.

Ron, I remember that cooling the milk was one of your jobs. So, consequently, whenever I was with you, I helped pumping the cold water after the milk was collected in the evening.

**Ron Lackey:** We just had a big water trough at that time.

**Ross Burgar:** Yeah. Then Lidsters would come by and pick it up in the morning. And I remember when you got an electric pump. That was a big change. Technology!

**Nick Doelman:** Talking about change, pumping water to cool the milk, today and 20 years ago already, you had to have basically a screen on

your milk tank that indicated whatever the temperature was through the past 24 hours. So, the milk trucker can see if that milk has ever spiked. And if it's ever spiked, he won't pick it up.

Yeah, say it got to about 40 degrees at any time, it either had to be dumped ... or it'd go to another outlet that could handle milk that had reached a certain temperature.

One of the things we didn't touch on is that this part of Ontario, in Southwold Township, is purebred livestock sales. We sold cattle to Cuba, to China, India, Italy and USA being the bigger market, and Russia.

**Karen Auckland:** Shore Sales?

**Nick Doelman:** Shore Sales, yeah, Shore Sales Barn, you know, was worldwide known, which was in Southwold Township. Things have changed a lot, but there are still a lot of cattle sales.

**Perry Clutterbuck:** When we got out of Holsteins, all our heifers went to Korea. So that got us a good bonus in price. They were all purebred.

**Karen Collard:** I was just going to say a lot of farmers, everybody here farmed cows. In 1965, when the milk board came in, you had to go to bulk cooling. Just a lot of guys said, “I'm either going to go or I'm out.” And so, my dad was out.

**Nick Doelman:** The bulk cooling requirements depended a lot on the processor and started probably in the late 1950s. And even prior to that, if it was going to a plant that was farming milk, like “fluid milk”, you had to have refrigerating cooling. And I'm not sure just when that changed. And I think Carnation and Borden’s were the last ones where they had to have the milk refrigerated.

(Editor's Note: Fluid milk refers to milk that remains in its liquid form, as opposed to powdered or condensed milk. Fluid milk undergoes processes like pasteurization or Ultra High Temperature (UHT) treatment to eliminate harmful bacteria while preserving its nutrients and flavour.)

**Richard Andrews:** Well, the milk board has kept good quality and good consistent prices. It's been good. But I don't know with some pressure from Mr. Trump now.

## Let's talk a little bit about farm organizations that you grew up with. How many of you participated in one of those clubs along the way?

**Karen Auckland:** The model for 4-H was "Learn to Do by Doing". So maybe some comfort if you took leadership roles in organizations in your adult life. And they were fun.

**Richard Andrews:** It covered a lot of aspects. I remember my mom doing Home Economics for herself. It was always so interesting because it was all young ladies, really. We had to make sure who was coming into the house and check all the ladies!

**Karen Auckland:** That's where a lot of the romances started… 4H or Junior Farmers!

**Karen Collard:** They're trying to get that going again. Did you read that?

**Karen Auckland:** I think it was an opportunity to meet with peers of your farming community because we rode the school bus to high school.

**Richard Andrews:** It was very practical. And as you said, it got you used to talking to other people and other groups, other clubs. The sports were quite a big event too. Especially the Junior Farmers!

## With respect to 4-H, Junior Farmers and other agricultural clubs, discuss your experiences with local fairs.

**Karen Auckland:** The Shedden Fair was your achievement day, so you were expected to attend that fair. You could go to interclub competition and go to Aylmer Fair. I think the beef guys maybe went to Wallacetown Fair.

It was a chance to see other 4-H clubs and meet other 4-Hers. But that was your achievement day. So, you were expected to be there to get credit for your club.

And, it was the same with the homemaking clubs. We had an achievement day where several clubs from Southwold and Dutton Dunwich and maybe even West Elgin all, say, went to the Wallacetown Hall and you had to put up displays and whatever. You were expected to be there in order to get credit for your club.

**Sarah Emons:** It's interesting because I still do a lot of fairs now, not just locally, but around. I found the 4-H kids, a lot of the 4-H kids did *not* live on farms. They would get to go to someone else's farm, like a friend, and take care of the animals there. So it got these kids who didn't have access to land and livestock and everything to get a little taste of it. I thought that was really great for those kids.

**Richard Andrews:** I appreciate it. Shedden still has a great Ag fair, I think.

**Karen Collard:** Was it *just* the Ag fair? Did you go to any of that? Like they had, maybe it was at the fair, I don't know. I have a couple of certificates that my dad had for winning something. I don't think it says Shedden Fair. It says Southwold Township had something.

**Ross Burgar:** Yeah, they had School Fairs. They used to call them School Fairs.

**Richard Andrews:** Well, they also had an Elgin Soil and Crop competition. And the farmers, you know, they'd spend all winter cleaning grain and getting just the right bale of hay. It was a very good competition.

I remember one of the last ones was at the (Elgin) Plowing Match at the Fingal Air Bomber School. And it really was, and Shedden is good too, but that was really quite a competition. You know, and again, if you had the champion grain and hay, you, well, it was a good competition, and yeah, kind of fun.

## Let's discuss traditional barns, silos and building styles and the transition to lower, larger barns we see today. Why the change?

**Jim Boughner:** So you can get to it with a loader tractor, so you don't have to do any pitching. That's why. We have a lot of small "stations" in the older barns.

**Richard Andrews:** Most of the feed is stored out in bunker silos now, and so they don't need that height anymore, and easier for ventilation, I guess, maybe.

**Jim Dodd:** They've got lots of ventilation, open side and curtains. Lift up the whole side… it expands.

**Karen Auckland:** And that has to do with herd health. When you think of the old barns like that, how closed up they were in the wintertime, we're now, again, more education, health of the animal, you need air circulation.

**Ross Burgar:** Of course, every barn today is a specialty barn, whether it be a dairy barn, poultry barn, or a swine operation. They'd be built specifically for that.

**Nick Doelman:** Yeah, there is no general barn anymore.

Going back to silos, they really started out with small silos, small diameter, pitched out by hand. Then they went to automation as far as unloading.

And as those silos got bigger, they went to sealed silos. And the cost compared to bunker silos is just so much different than the volume that there's just no demand now for sealed silos and the specialty equipment that goes along with it.

**Ross Burgar:** Right. So along with that, talk to me about grain drying and storage. Every farm of any significant size now mostly does their own drying and storage?

**Karen Collard:** Can I say something about barns? This winter, just north of London, they had so much snow and there were 39 barns that went down. And they're all the modern ones. The old barns like some of ours withstood a lot of snow because the roofs were (designed better). There's something to be said for the modern day engineers and the old boys.

**Jim Boughner:** All of those old barns are warm in the winter. You've got water that's freezing. Even the cattle in there, the water was freezing.

**Karen Collard:** Karen Auckland's right about the health and particularly chickens and pigs and all. But for the dairy barn, we never had any pneumonia in our old barn compared to some of these new ones that they come up with. Just saying! We got a lot of fans in ours, so it didn't matter. But I'm just saying… they were healthy in some of those old barns.

**Richard Andrews:** Yeah, a lot of windows.

**Karen Collard:** Anyway, on to your drying your grain, guys.

**Jim Boughner:** I dry mine in a corn crib. And I had a guy delivering stuff there a week or two ago and he said, what is that? He said, "I've never seen that."

I said, "Its corn". This guy, he was probably 35 years old.

"Well, how do you get it in there?" There's only two corn cribs back in our area and that's the only two I know of that are still being used.

**Steve Jones:** Yeah, everybody had a corn crib.

**Jim Boughner:** If you picked it with a picker, the whole cob comes off and my corn crib's 52 feet long and 16 feet high and it's all wire on the sides, eh? And that's where it dries.

**Nick Doelman:** And the width is what, six feet?

**Jim Boughner:** No, mine's narrower. Mine's five feet wide.

**Nick Doelman:** So basically, the air can go through it. Like if it was 25 feet wide, it would not.

It's got to be narrow enough so that the air can go through it and the cobs don't, you know, there's enough space around the cob that the wind can go through it.

**Karen Auckland:** And it doesn't cost you anything.

**Ross Burgar:** Corn cribs were replaced by those big silver structures I see on every farm now.

**Gerry Goodhue:** Well, you'd have to have a corn crib. We used to clean a lot of them out. I hated that. They were full of rats.

**Richard Andrews:** But it was very practical.

**Nick Doelman:** And farmers were practical! Yeah, cribs worked well.

**Jim Dodd:** Just to go back to the style of barns that we used to have and build, they were two-story and the idea was we'd store our straw and hay in there. But then we got on the big round balers and big square balers and whatnot, so it's not as handy for storing those big bales

up in a second story. I mean, we still have small square bales too, but the majority are big ones, I'd say.

**Ross Burgar:** And a lot of bales get wrapped in plastic now so they're not needed to be inside a barn.

**Len Lynch:** So one person can go out now and take the whole crop of hay off by himself. Haying was a summer job that we did when we were teenagers.

**Richard Andrews:** My mom would say that it's a downfall of (today's) young people. When we went from the small square bales, it took away that exercise and that work.

**Karen Auckland:** In a hot hay mow, too!

**Richard Andrews:** There was a good feeling when that mow was full. And good hay. But now it's all done by tractor.

**Nick Doelman:** We don't touch the bales. Would you want to go back to it? No!

We talked about it before. ***We cannot move backwards.*** Once we know something works better, we'll go to it. And that's the reason why Canada and the Western world is not hungry. It's because this is the way we've gone. There are still a lot of parts of the world where they haven't moved ahead. And they're hungry. It's hard to understand that resistance to change.

Even though we look back at the good old days! But they're really not that. If we stayed with them, we'd be hungry too. Yeah.

You still do a lot of square bales, little bales, don't you, Karen?

**Karen Collard:** Yeah, I do.

**Nick Doelman:** But you can automate it if you want.

**Karen Collard:** Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

**Len Lynch:** I think we should look at farm sizes. Just as a reference to farm sizes.

This is from the 1921 Census:
Southwold had a total of 664 farms.

9 farms operated one to four acres.
13 farms in Southwold had one to ten acres.
131 farms had 11 to 50 acres.
279 farms had 51 to 100 acres.
197 farms were 101 to 200 acres
23 farms were 201 to 299 acres.
12 Southwold farms had 300 acres and over.

Any idea how many farms are in Southwold now?

**Gerry Goodhue:** A lot fewer. The farms are, the land is still there, but fewer people are looking after it, obviously.

**Ross Burgar:** And when did that really start to happen? When did what we called "the small family farm" start disappearing?

**Richard Andrews:** Well, in the 60s, maybe. And yet, you know, some of these market garden farms do very well, but very specialized.

**Len Lynch:** On March 19th of this year, Farm Credit Canada says that the average price per acre is $33,700.

**Richard Andrews:** Well, we did talk to a real estate guy and he told us that Elgin County, and I don't know where he got his figures, the land price last year went up 3% in 24, but I don't know. I don't know if that's really in our area. I can tell you three farms that went between $40,000

and $55,000 an acre, you know, but he talked to MTO about that and, oh, we don't have those (prices).

Anyway land, as somebody said, a lot like Warren Buffett and Bill Gates and those guys, you know, the real gold is farmland. You know, worth a lot more than stocks and bonds, really, because they don't make any more.

**Ross Burgar:** In 1940, they bought farm land to build the Fingal Air Base. It may have been similar to your situation. It'd be interesting to know, were they offering those farmers fair price for taking over land for the air base? Frank House, in February of 1940, sold to His Majesty the King and the right of the Dominion of Canada, 70 acres for $5,800.

That was $83 an acre in 1940.

**Karen Collard:** Yeah. But it's a big difference from the Aldborough Township county line to the Bayham town line, and the river to the lake for soil type. Okay, like Gerry Goodhue down there's got some darn nice stuff. You get a little north of Highway #3 and it's not quite the same world. You know, but anyway, it (good soil) makes a difference to the price.  Richard's got some really nice dirt!

But those of us who've worked on that good old clay stuff, we know.

**Gerry Goodhue:** But the trouble is that those prices are coming together so close.

**Karen Collard:** Like that battery plant went on some of the best (land) in the county. And same as the Ford Plant went on the best (land) in Southwold.

**Jim Boughner:** Why does the Ford Plant have all that wasted land?

**Karen Collard:** Well, that's their 800 acres there, too.

**Gerry Goodhue:** Why isn't the battery plant there?

**Sarah Emons:** Well, Richard, I remember one time you said to me when we (Southwold Township Council) were talking about the Planning Act and all that stuff. And you said, “Do you give any consideration to that when they're making these development decisions?” And I'd never thought about that before you said that.

**Richard Andrews:** There's a need to save a certain percentage of farmland.

**Sarah Emons:** But the soil type, right? We never consider kind of what land is the best for growing before it's paved over.

Like there could be something like provincially significant wetlands are protected under the Planning Act because there'd be special places. You could do the same thing with agricultural soils.

**Richard Andrews:** Yes.

**Sarah Emons:** Right, there's a policy idea!

**Richard Andrews:** Well, you know, you drive by Powerco and there's, I don't know how much wasted ground. You know, it could be *still* in crops.

And, you know, I think if they'd left it in farmland in 50 years, that farmland would have made a lot more money than Powerco is ever going to make without costing the government billions and billions of

dollars. I think I really find fault with the politicians that have just bent over backwards to bring that Powerco.

I think, without really thinking it through, you know, because they still don't know about sewage. You got to bring a whole new hydro line in and water.

They don't know if they're going to have enough water.

**Gerry Goodhue:** You can grow so much more corn than you used to, so it doesn't matter.  Oh, that's an excuse, I guess, yeah.

**Richard Andrews:** But that's a very poor excuse. It is, it's a very poor excuse. And, who knows what the future there is. And as you said, there's 500 acres, 37 acres left of the Ford Plant would have easily been plenty big enough. They don't need 1,500 acres. No, I can't figure it out.

**Sarah Emons:** I'm just thinking about, like, if we value, you know, farmland based on kind of these real estate values, but there should really be some kind of metric that could measure the productiveness value, because that's the only way you kind of make that change, right? You have to put it in economic terms, speak the language of capitalism, as I always say. But that's an interesting thing to think about, right?

**Richard Andrews:** It is.

**Sarah Emons:** What kind of metric could you develop?

**Richard Andrews:** Of course, the weather varies a bit. You know, like last year, the lighter ground really worked well because of all the early rain. But we are so lucky to have all this good rain.

It's a very productive area. And that Fingal Gunnery School, I think that's some of the best ground around too that really grows good crops.

We have a nice mix of, you know, that clay loam, which doesn't dry out too much, it holds the moisture, and yet it can work it easily.

**Len Lynch:** When they grew tobacco in Southwold, it was either at the north, you know, by the Thames River where my wife's (Harry Guest) family grew tobacco. There were a cluster of tobacco farmers (on Routh Road). And then down by (what is now) Great Lakes Farms, there were a number of tobacco farms.

It was the same thing with orchards. In that area of the south (Southwold Township), Bill Bridge had an apple orchard long before Great Lakes Farms, because that farm was tobacco land originally in our time. And Brooyman's Orchards started up in the 60s, probably. You can really see the changes in apple orchard management now. They've really done a good job of changing how they plant the trees and sizes.

**Gerry Goodhue:** Most of them are dwarf trees now.

**Richard Andrews:** Axfords used to do a lot of peaches at one time.

**Karen Collard:** Frank Turville, Abe Dielman…

**Ken Dodd:** Abe Dielman… they had peaches.

**Karen Collard:** The Browns down the end of the Fingal Road... Neil Brown, his dad George, they always had orchards.

**Jim Dodd:** And the Fultons used to have pears too.

**Gerry Goodhue:** The peach trees, I took a bunch of them out. They had no market here for them. But I think they're starting to sneak back in here.

**Karen Collard:** Well, see there, how many years ago, that was 10-15 years ago, they got rid of a lot. No market, no market. Now they're, well, now they're trying for them, right?

Well, it's like a cow, you can't grow it overnight. Same as an apple tree, right?

**Len Lynch:** What about maple syrup producers? A lot of different farms have their own maple syrup. I used to go to Hagerty's sugar bush on Bush Line there. Did anybody else around the table do maple syrup in their time?

**Karen Auckland:** Just did it for ourselves. Yeah.

**Len Lynch:** Are Palmer's the only one in Southwold producing maple syrup for commercial sales?

**Karen Auckland:** No, Rodger's, (as well).

**Perry Clutterbuck:** Oh, yeah, and I used to work for Carmichael's. They had the whole bush, but the trees blew down. So, how do you get it going again?

## Last Thoughts… are there any topics or memories before we call it a day?

**Richard Andrews:** You know, the sense of humour of some of those old farmers was really good. Nowadays, and it's true, every day you read about… they do have organizations now for stress, sort of that mental stress. Back then… and I'm sure there was lots of it, but they sort of solved it themselves, I

think.  I'm not saying it's wrong that they don't, but you know, there was such a community of farmers, and you know, they were visiting, and Sunday church was very important.  Part of the importance of church was that, as I remember, my mom and dad, you know, church service would be maybe an hour, and it'd be two hours of visiting after, at least, maybe three. And often you'd get invited to somebody's house.

But, you know, they had a real sense of community, I think, and camaraderie and I think it's still there, too.

**Len Lynch:** I doubt there are too many professions that are… farmers are optimistic, I *think*, about most things.

**Gerald Boughner:** Yes.

**Len Lynch:** I often think about my father-in-law (Harry Guest). He'd go out in the morning. If it was a sunny, bright day, he'd be happy because it was sunny and bright, and good day to do this, or this, or this.

If it was raining, well, "We need the rain. We need a little bit of moisture. We don't have to irrigate now".

I think farmers genuinely are people who love their jobs. And there are not a lot of people, I don't think, in the world who love going to work every day and doing what they want to do. Farming is not a job, it's a lifestyle.

**Gerald Boughner:** ***It's a life. It's not a job.***

**Len Lynch:** That's the beauty of what you people have been able to, you know, have for a lifetime, basically.

**Jim Boughner:** In fact, then, like Dad, you know, one vehicle is all he ever had. Nowadays, it's three. He made the one vehicle do. And one phone!

**Karen Auckland:** And one telephone.

**Gerald Boughner:** Yeah, your party line.

**Ken Dodd:** And it was in the kitchen, so everybody could hear you speak.

**Jim Dodd:** You couldn't run off anywhere. Your neighbours could hear. You'd hear, *"Click, Click… You still got that, Don?"*

**Gerald Boughner:** Four party lines!

**Karen Auckland:** And Ross, when you're talking about styles of barns, one of my sisters recently found something in Dad's (Albert Auckland's) book. They used to have dairy cows on one part of the main barn and pigs on the other side. Then when they started to ship milk to Silverwood's, Silverwood's said you can't have the pigs in the barn. So therefore, they built a pig pen. So pig barn. Well, we call it pig pen. So a change was regulated by somebody else.

And that would change when they put cows on the other side once the pigs were done.

**Ross Burgar:** And you talked about the social aspect of farming and how everybody stuck together, leaned on each other. That's why I love these barn raising or thrashing bee stories. I didn't grow up on a farm. My family got out of farming just before I was born.

The reason my family got out of dairy farming or farming all together was their herd got tuberculosis and had to be destroyed. That was at a time when my dad was trying to decide, is he going to stick with farming or not? And he said, "Well, I guess that's the decision made!" So I was *that* close to being a dairy farmer.

**Richard Andrews:** Well, the one thing I think we could mention too is, you know, I think sometimes we forget especially my dad and mom's generation… that it was all work and they didn't have fun.

But I remember my dad and you know, and they're all talking about after a marriage. And I'm going to probably forget the right word, but what did they call that when they were, and they'd always do it when they weren't expecting it.

**Gerald Boughner:** Oh, a Shivaree!

**Richard Andrews:** Some of the stories were fun.

**Gerry Goodhue:** I was lucky enough to get that twice!

**Richard Andrews:** I remember dad telling them about one place and I don't know, I think it was at Annett's actually. And you know, they went there and somebody had the smart idea of spreading some, and I think it was wheat, on the floors. And they said that, you know, there are these beautiful pine floors. Of course, when they walked over the wheat, it all dented all these floors. And again, it was all in the name of fun. I think it was fun, but you know, they wouldn't let somebody get married without a shivaree.

And the old card games and dances and things. I mean, they knew how to have fun.

**Michelle Hoffsuemmer:** They made their own fun.

**Richard Andrews:** And of course, food was a big part of that. You know, they took all the labels off our cans. It was quite a surprise for supper each night.

But again, they did have fun, I think.

## Thank You

*To all our Southwold area farm friends, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for joining this informal Southwold 175 Agriculture Chat. Your insights, stories, and shared experiences have truly enriched this conversation and deepened our appreciation for the vital role you play in our community. Your hard work and dedication inspire us all, and it has been an honour to celebrate Southwold's agricultural heritage with you.*

*Here's to 175 years of resilience, innovation, and community spirit—thank you for being a part of this milestone!*

## We are grateful for access to the following resources that have made this Southwold Agriculture project possible:

**Elgin County Archives**

**Independence & Plenty, An Illustrated History of Shedden, Fingal and The Surrounding Area,** (1979) by Alison Vicary and Michael Clark

**Sims' History of Elgin, Vol. 1,** (1984) by Hugh Joffre Sims

https://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/agriculture/settling.aspx

https://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/agriculture/strength.aspx

https://ofa.on.ca/about-ofa/ofa-history/

https://www.elgincounty.ca/ElginCounty/CulturalServices/Archives/tweedsmuir/southwold.html

https://www.elgincounty.ca/ElginCounty/CulturalServices/Archives/TalbotTract/talbot.html

https://ontario.heritagepin.com/southwold-township-in-elgin/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southwold,_Ontario

https://www.elgincounty.ca/ElginCounty/CulturalServices/Archives/tweedsmuir/Shedden%20Vol%201/page%20081%20-%20093.pdf

https://southwoldtownshiphistory.ca/

https://club1913.ca/

https://4-h-canada.ca/

https://www.southwold.ca/

https://www.oahf.on.ca/

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https://www.stthomastoday.ca/2023/02/05/61839/

https://www.jfao.on.ca/about-jfao/

https://www.elgincounty.ca/ElginCounty/CulturalServices/Archives/tweedsmuir/Middlemarch%20Vol%201/page%20134%20-%20148.pdf

*We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of Emily Finch and her staff at the Southwold Library for graciously providing the venue for our Agriculture discussion. Thank you!*