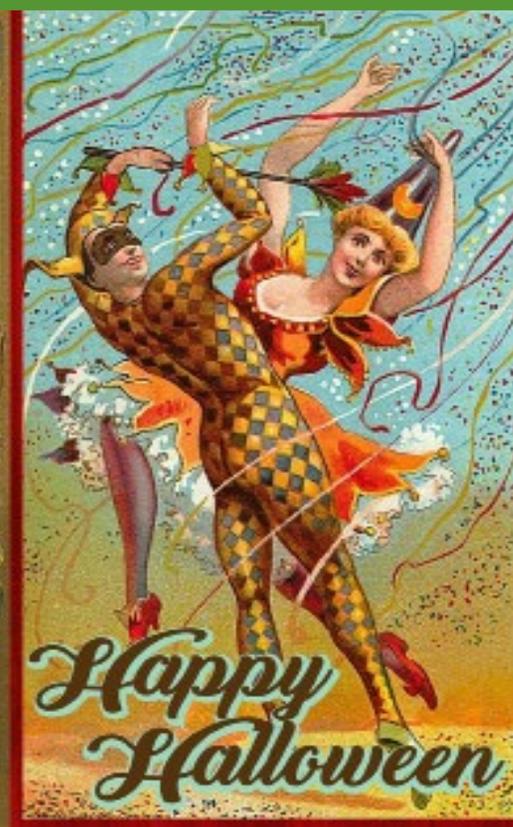




HEIRS

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society
n e w s l e t t e r



Are you ready?



Catching Up!

- by Lorrie Stephenson, President, HEIRS

It's a month behind us now, but it would be remiss not to acknowledge our hometown proud 169th Harrow Fair. Anyone who hasn't lived in Harrow may never understand the quality of life that comes from being part of a small town community.

It's weekends like Labour Day and the Harrow Fair that really bring out the essence of our small town. Don't bother trying to get anything from Home Hardware on the Saturday before Labour Day, because they're closed for the Harrow parade. Crowds gathered along the route to watch friends & neighbours as they marched down the parade route, all sharing the joy of participating in this town tradition. For one weekend a year, 134 McAffee (aka the Harrow Fairgrounds) becomes the agricultural, entertainment, and award-winning pie mecca of Essex County. The sound of the fair's music reaches across neighbourhoods and, if you live down wind, so does the smell of farm animals. That's the price of having 'living history' in your own backyard.

It's not just on Labour Day that we experience this strong sense of community. Starting on page 7, Catharine Wilson describes what it meant to be a neighbour in the past – the mutual dependency, social and economic benefits, and relationships. Every day in our community there are local organizations, companies & people who help each other in ways that we may never see, or hear about. **That's mighty neighbourly.**

Once a year on Labour Day weekend, the rest of the world gets a chance to peek into our community.

An opportunity to recognize what a gem this small historic community on the edge of Canada is.

It's been over ten years since HEIRS bylaws and constitution has been updated. A lot has happened in those ten years, not the least of which is advancement in technology. On September 9, Laurie Brett, HEIRS member & volunteer, guided our board of directors through a detailed review of the HEIRS constitution and bylaws. After several hours, our team of directors decided to take a break. We will continue the review on October 4th, working towards presenting the updated bylaws & constitution to members at the May 2024 AGM.

On September 16, the HEIRS booth was once again at the Heritage Colchester Market. We were able to meet some new faces and chat with old friends on a beautiful, late summer day.

If you're around the town of Harrow, you may spot HEIRS director, Jackie Baldwin. She has been visiting businesses and distributing our project preservation forms. She's asking that each business share their story to be preserved for future generations. If your business hasn't received a form yet, or if you've had a business in the past which you would like recorded, please contact Jackie by email at jacquelinebaldwin11@gmail.com.

You can also spot Jackie at the HEIRS office for our new extended hours: Tuesday 6:00-8:00 and Saturday 10-2.

Our weekday hours remain, as always, Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-3 with Pauline Baldwin, Milo Johnson and Tera Kimball available to assist researchers.

Estate donations: If you have genealogical or estate records that you'd like to share and preserve, please contact us at heirsont@gmail.com.

Catching Up!... cont'd

Author and HEIRS member, Jean Rae Baxter provided us a fascinating look into 1837-38, as she presented her book "Battle on the Ice".

Copies of her book are available for sale at HEIRS. Her historical fiction novel is based on the unrest in Upper Canada at that time, with an American invasion & subsequent battle held on the ice off of Pelee Island. Jean answered audience questions on both the history & her decision-making while writing the novel. Jean was accompanied by HEIRS member & good friend Ruth Nicholson on a very full, week-long schedule of Essex County events.



Left:
Directors Lorrie & Milo, with retired director Ted Steele who assisted Jean as she researched for the book.

SPECIAL TIME
October 26th Meeting: 1:00 PM

(Harrow-Colchester Arena Community Meeting Room)

October is Women's History Month in Canada, and on the 18th it is Persons Day. It marks the day in 1929 when the historic decision to include women in the legal definition of 'persons' was made.

This month, we welcome the Mayor of Essex, Sherry Bondy, to speak on the successes & challenges of being a woman in regional politics. Our last election year showed a turn in the times, when the majority of the regional mayors are women, and more women councillors were elected across the county. There's still an underrepresentation of women in politics though, and this month represents an appropriate time to acknowledge the strides taken towards equality.

The HEIRS committee will recognize Remembrance Day at this meeting and the important role of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 338 plays in supporting local veterans and their families.



Next month's meeting, November 23rd

We'll welcome Mary Anne Adam, director of the Belle Vue Conservancy to share her historical novel, 'The Medicine Bag' in which this historic mansion plays a key role. She'll also update us on the Belle Vue restoration rescue project. To see an interior view of Belle Vue, visit <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=b2dK9F5uTJN>.

The Public is Welcome to Attend Our Meetings – Bring a Friend!



Happy Thanksgiving...

- by Bonnie Storey, Treasurer, HEIRS

After a very interesting and exciting summer, with wind, rain, humidity and heat bringing challenges to all of us nearly every day, finally, fall is in the air. I am optimistic enough to believe that, as Essex County is the best place to live in North America, that the fall will return to us a good harvest, beautiful colour, and sun-drenched afternoons that are just the right temperature.

I have spent time this weekend watching the trees outside my window begin to change colour as I read a nice little book about domestic life in 17th Century Virginia. My mind was drawn to the fall festivals of thanksgiving practiced by different groups across this continent. We all work hard to prepare these festivals for our families, employing a lot of effort and time. Consider that in the past, in pioneer times, the food gathering was done in the fields by hand, rather than at the local grocery store and your favourite fruit stand.

The preparation of meat dishes often began with a hunt, or at least the butchering of the animals before preparing the spit outdoors. Families enlisted & supervised their young sons to turn the spit for many hours to roast the meat. Fowl was definitely hunted, dressed & added to the spit, rather than purchasing it already dressed by the local butcher. If the weather was cold & rainy, cooking was done in the home in a large fireplace that took up most of the room. Under the spit was a tray of wood or some metal, there to catch various juices for gravy, or the fat to use in baking, etc.

Have you ever eaten cookies baked using pork fat left over after the soap was made?

Butter was saved by the mistress of the home for fancy dishes. Management of the dairy herd & products was time-consuming on its own, as not many refrigerators existed in those days. Homes were often built over springs & streams to keep dairy food fresh. Foods were salted, dried, or smoked to maintain them. The lucky homeowner with land over a spring kept foods for the whole community.

Fruits & vegetables were harvested and gathered by the children & youth of the community, to be used or preserved by cooking, drying & storing in the cold room near a spring under the living area. In general, food acquisition, preparation, service and clean-up to prepare for the next day, week, or month, was a full-time occupation for many members of the family or community.

Nowadays, we work hard with as much dedication and love for our families regardless of their origins, as our ancestors did. The physical labour required to prepare a feast may or may not be as tiring, time-consuming, or all-encompassing as it was in the 17th century, but the meaning remains the same.

I found a bag of Canadian cranberries in my freezer, so they went into the right pot & began to pop. There's nothing like the brilliant deep red colour & spicy aroma of homemade cranberry sauce. While they cooked & I stirred, I reminisced about childhood Thanksgiving & Christmas holidays where homemade cranberry sauce had a special place in the middle of the table – in a silver bowl with its own silver spoon, with the tablecloth always white linen, pressed within an inch of its life.

I know this information may not be new to our readers, but I have enjoyed reviewing the past & I understand the effort required for our ancestors to prepare every meal. **Especially so for the huge effort they made to celebrate the festival of Thanksgiving.**



**'All for one & one for all'
– the Potato Pool**

- by Lorrie Stephenson & Milo Johnson

The Harrow Potato Growers Association (HPGA) was founded in 1935 with 51 members. The main objective of the association was to market its potato crop in an orderly manner. The association was a cooperative, non-profit association where potatoes were bagged, shipped and sold for members on a fee basis.

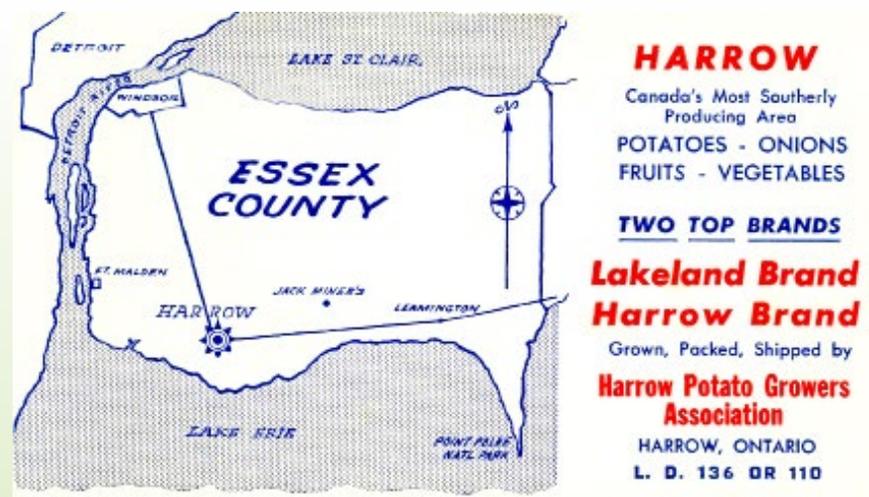
At the end of the season, each grower received a rebate for any over charges, based on the amount of potatoes that were handled for them.

Stanley Bailey was the first president and held the position for many years. It was located north of Sinasac Street, between Walnut and Arthur Streets. The buildings were right beside the railway tracks (Greenway) and a spur off the tracks allowed loading of produce from the dock attached to the back of the building.



By the end of the 1935 season 24,000 bags of potatoes were shipped. By 1940, the Harrow PGA, Lakehead brand of potatoes had gained a reputation across Canada for being uniform, high quality potatoes. The labour intensive work of bagging was done by 20-25 employees, nearly all of them school boys.

Potatoes were grown from certified Prince Edward Island Irish cobbler seed and as the popularity of Lakehead potatoes grew, farmers kept up with demand. In 1944 there were 130 member growers and by end of season 103,000 bags were shipped out across Canada, and as far away as the West Indies.



With this growth, more employees were needed and Manager Alan Buchanan employed 40 school boys. In 1945, 150 grower members of the Harrow PGA had planted 180,000 acres of potatoes, with over 150,000 bags of famous Lakeland potatoes shipped out by the close of the season.

Over time, 3 more grading sheds were added, increasing space by 50%.

The Potato Pool... cont'd

The HPGA ran into financial difficulties in 1961, and in order to cut costs AMC Sales took over sales for the Harrow area. AMC Sales was a selling agency of the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers Marketing Board and handled both field and greenhouse produce, and paid growers directly.

In 1964 the HPGA purchased \$25,000 worth of new washing and grading equipment. Potatoes were washed, graded and bagged and weighed automatically, speeding up production to a rate of 700 bags or a train carload per hour. This is a far cry from the 400 bags per day shipped in 1942.

“The top 6 inches of soil provided hundreds of farmers a high level of income, making Harrow one of the most productive agricultural areas in Canada, with a greater variety and a high earning power crop.” - Ernie Bezaire, August 30, 1965, Windsor Star.



Above left: Linda Hernandez, left, & Bernice Shepley, two employees at the grading station, check potatoes through the washer. (Star Staff Bureau Photo)



Centre: Four carloads of peaches originating from Harrow were shipped to Western Canada and the Maritimes in one week. More fruit was on the way the following week because Harrow peaches commanded a wide market. Shown is Charles Webster, manager of the Harrow Potato Growers Co-operative, which ships the fruit. (Star Staff Photo)

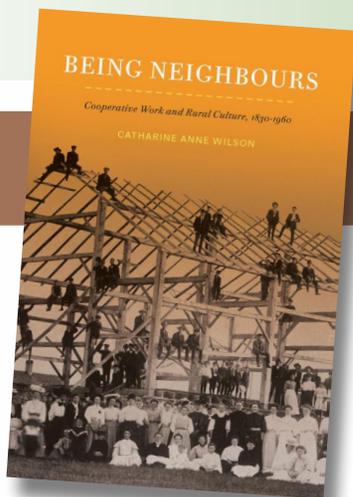
Teens, both boys and girls, worked at the Potato Pool in the '60s where the following produce were cleaned, washed (disinfected), and sometimes waxed (especially cukes): potatoes, early tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers, peaches, and cucumbers.

Dr. Koch of the Harrow Research Station met with members of the HPGA in 1965 to discuss research in soil science and the requirements for high value per-acre crops. Over the years, the contributions to agriculture by the Harrow Research Station have become known world-wide. In July 1966, at the request of potato growers throughout Canada, the Federal government posted an emergency potato tariff on potatoes grown and shipped into Canada to protect Canadian growers from high influx of American potatoes. Over time, farmers sold their produce elsewhere and declining profits caused the HPGA to be sold.

In June 1978 the Harrow Potato Growers Co-operative posted a notice of intent to dissolve in the Windsor Star, bringing the end of an era in Essex County.

Left: Record crops and fair prices brought 1947 sales up to almost \$440,000.

Shown, (left to right) are Mr. S. Murray Clark, MP., Essex South; Mr. Stanley Baily, president of the association, and Mr. Donald Klie, first vice-president. (Star Staff Photo)



'Being Neighbours'... Q & A

- by Lorrie Stephenson

Catharine Wilson, F.R.S.C., holds the Redelmeier Professorship in Rural History at the University of Guelph. She is the Founder and Director of the Rural Diary Archive.

<https://ruraldiaries.lib.uoguelph.ca/home>

Her book, "Being Neighbours: Cooperative Work and Rural Culture, 1830-1960" is available in the HEIRS library.

Catharine contacted HEIRS to request copies of farm diaries from our collection. Through the efforts of our student volunteers, Chianna Meerschaut and Elicia Stephenson, the Arner Diaries collection was digitized, as our first contribution to her project.

Q. Catherine, please share some insights into your book with HEIRS?

Years ago, my mother gave me my great-great-grandmother's 1884 diary. I noticed that she mentioned 'bees' a lot: quilting, barn-raising, and threshing bees, and this inspired me to write a book about these events – occasions when neighbours worked together like bees in a hive.

Neighbourhood is assumed to have been a natural and defining part of rural life, yet we lack a clear understanding of how it functioned in a practical sense. It was so ordinary as to be unnoteworthy, and has slipped away with the oral culture of previous generations.

The work bee takes us into the heart of 'neighbourhood'.



Far Left: Lucy Middaugh, Catharine Wilson's 2x Great Grandmother, whose diary inspired the research for the book.

Left: Alfred L. Arner's diary info was contributed to the project by HEIRS.

The Brimmer and Iler diaries will soon be digitized.

Employing over one hundred farm diarists, my book delves into these families' daily lives, the intricacies of the labour exchange, and their workways, feasts, & hospitality. Old farm diaries show how families shared equipment and labour to adopt new technology and complete difficult, time-consuming, and time-sensitive tasks. They benefitted materially and socially from these voluntary, flexible, loosely structured networks of reciprocal assistance.



Figure 1.9 Buzz bee. The photograph at Elwood Peavy's wood-cutting bee in Erin Township, Wellington County, 1915, shows nine men around the machine, three women who prepared the meal, and their children.

Q&A with Catherine Wilson... cont'd

Through the prism of the bee and a close reading of the diaries, I uncover the subtle social politics of mutual dependency, the expectations neighbours had of each other, and their thinking, relationships, and ways of managing conflict and crisis. Stories of individual families and particular bees are richly detailed and illustrated, revealing the textures of rural life.

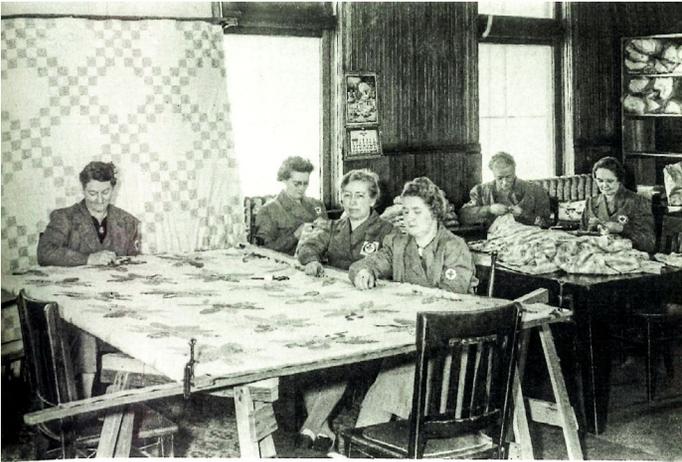


Figure 3.5 Red Cross quilting bee during the Second World War. In the twentieth century, the quilting bee moved out of the kitchen or parlour and into a public place. Here, women hold a bee in the Kenora Public Library.

Q. How does the information in the book benefit society today?

It deepens our respect for previous generations and can provide some examples on how to be a good neighbour today. It's important to remember that bees developed in response to specific circumstances: a scarcity of cash & labour-saving technology, and inadequate state and institutional safety nets.

They don't hold as much relevance today, but the study of old-time bees demonstrates the strength to be found in local people organizing their own ways of cooperating and having rules that are flexible.

“There is value in working together to achieve economies of scale, save money, and share skills.

Sharing resources creates a local knowledge base and a sense of neighbourliness & belonging that are important to mental health.”

Neighbourliness is an aspect of social sustainability that is as important to the sustainability of rural communities as engineering, technical agronomics, and ecological issues.

Q. Are there any lost practices you'd like to see revived?

The old-time work bee is still with us, though in altered form. Hosting a bee can still be a useful way to clean a park or cemetery.

A new generation of farmers is using What's App and other messaging platforms to arrange for sharing labour.

“I'd love it if the feast and barn dance were revived. People had so much fun at these events.”

Q. Catharine, what advice would you give to people interested in writing a history-related book?

Locate and read as many sources as possible that were created at the time and by the people you are studying. Diaries are particularly useful if you are willing to spend time with them and tease out the information. Diarists selected and censored what they recorded, but their regular entries are quite reliable as they were written on the day of the event, created as a memory aid, and often left in a public place for other family members to read.

“Their immediacy takes you back to that day and you feel like ‘you are there’.

Reading them is a wonderful form of time-travelling.”



'Hallowe'en As It Used to Was'...

- by Ted Steele, HEIRS Member

It's that spooky time again, as Halloween items fill store shelves. I thought it appropriate to take a look at why we celebrate as we do.

In the 1800s, the seasons ruled our lives & Mother Nature signalled what was to come. October meant harvest-time was in full swing – time to gather & preserve crops, get animal feeds stored & end all farming chores. The shorter days added to the pressure to ready things for the approaching winter. As October ended, the traditional finish date of the farmers' busy season came. It was time to relax a bit & enjoy the fruits of your labour with family & neighbours. Groups gathered for huge bonfires, with cider of both hard & soft varieties, and lots of food. Usually music & square dances were featured as well. The young people had the chance to do some "sparking" then, while seniors would entrance the young ones with ghost stories, as their parents hit the dance floor.

When immigrants from various countries arrived in Canada, they naturally brought their own traditions of celebration. The Irish believed in banshees & evil spirits that were let loose on the world every All Saints Day. It marked remembrance of those who had gone before. They introduced the custom of carving faces into various vegetables to scare away the evil spirits. As pumpkins were plentiful at this time of year & the perfect size, they became the vegetable of choice.

The young ones took advantage of this opportunity each Fall to play some youthful pranks in the dark – tipping over outhouses, disassembling wagons & hanging laundry in unusual places to embarrass its owner.

Often an unpleasant neighbour would become their target, but of course the 'evil spirits' were blamed.

Stories were told of monsters of various kinds, as belief in magic & witches, vampires & headless horsemen (my favourite!) were believed by some. It was scary to contemplate dark nights filled with animal sounds & what 'might be out there'. The supernatural element gradually subsided over the years.

Halloween transformed into more of a children's festival, with not-so-scary costumes and the chance to make the rounds to friendly neighbours who enjoyed seeing their outfits, and gladly provided treats & candy to bring smiles to small faces.

At one time, "trick or treat" was almost a threat, but kids were much more interested in collecting goodies than taking revenge on a neighbour not partaking in Halloween. In the 1950s, the night before Halloween had become 'Devil's Night'.

I recall my brothers & I learning to rig up a wooden thread spool with a sewing needle. It was attached to a glass window surface while our neighbours watched TV. As the thread was slowly unwound, the needle would drag along the glass, causing quite an irritating scratching sound.

Window-soaping was common. Bars of soap were used to write unwanted messages on windows, later to be cleaned off by the owners, especially when on store windows. Garbage might be tipped over & scattered too. Later on, in larger cities, unfortunately violence became common on Devil's Night. Detroit became known for its house fires for years on this night. Public outcry and police presence put a stop to it. That sort of behaviour is rare today.

Our generation was fortunate to have enjoyed the fun, mystery & excitement of the Halloween season as kids. **It seems different now, but for kids who participate, the excitement continues.**

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Membership

\$30 CDN/U.S. per person or couple. Memberships run **May 1st - April 30th** annually.

Please provide phone, postal address, email & family names you are researching.

Payments

E-transfer payments & donations to HEIRS? Send to: heirsont@gmail.com

Make cheques payable to HEIRS, 243 McAfee St., PO Box 53, Harrow ON, Canada N0R 1G0

NOTE: Members may research for free. Non-members using research library \$10 per visit (+ photocopy fees)

Newsletters & Meetings

HEIRS newsletter is published 9 times/year: colour digital version by email or B&W print version by regular post.

Meetings held on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (July, August & December excepted).

Resource Centre Hours

Tuesdays 10AM-3PM & 6PM-8PM | Thursdays 10AM-3PM | Saturdays 10AM-2PM

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