

Page 2 Background History of the Area

At this time the stooked grain had been placed in the barn for safe storage until other fall work was done. Then the thresher went from farm to farm and did custom work. The threshing bees were as all other chores a neighbour exchange of custom work, and the meals that the woman of the house was expected to provide would make the present day banquet meal look like meagre fare. As a result of all the dust, rust and smut that would be flying around inside the barn while the threshing was being done, the men when they appeared at the house looked more like black men than anything else. But not concerned about that, they sat down to a bountiful meal spread on a table graced with a white table cloth. Woe betide the lady of the house who skimped on meals, she was sure to be found out, and next year the gang cleaned house as it were. Another threshing outfit that travelled over a large portion of the area doing custom threshing was the Artley Bros. Before the advent of the smaller individual threshing machines, a gas powered outfit run by Mac McMartin covered a large portion of North Sydenham serving the farmers.

The first horse drawn binders came to this area about 75 years ago or about 1890. Mowers also have been in use for more years than that, though the older generation felt the first row around the field must still be cut with the cradle before the mower or binder was used.

Grain growing and forage crops have become a successful agricultural practice in this area as witnessed by the large barns and silos that dot the landscape.

Orchards at one time were a common sight on every farm but due to frost, neglect, and specialization there are very few left. Many of the old name apples are no more and older citizens have nothing but fond memories of apples called "Greenings", "Ben Davis", "Maiden's Blush" and "Sheeps Nose". Then there was the apple peeling bee, which was enjoyed by young and old alike. The strings of peeled apples hanging up over the old wood stove lent a fragrance to the warm kitchen air that is very much lacking in our modern sterile air-conditioned functional kitchens.

This area of Sydenham Township was surveyed by Mr. John Telfer in 1846 and the town plot of Leith in 1851 by Mr. William Smith, Deputy-Provincial Surveyor. The township of Sydenham at this time was part of the County of Waterloo and Grey County did not come into being until January 23, 1854. The representatives from Sydenham Township to the first Grey County Council were Richard Carney and William McDonald.

More information about the timber in Sydenham Township has been recorded at the time the pioneers arrived. Maple was found in most wood-lots. Beech, birch and ash were also plentiful. The rock elm grew to a great height and was in demand for barn timbers. The hemlock was found on both high and low levels of land.