



WELLINGTON COUNTY MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

1877 Barn

History of the Poorhouse Barn

In January 1877, County Council wanted "...to obtain plans for a frame barn with stables underneath, sufficient for the protection of the stock, produce and implements of the Farm...to let the contract for the erection of the same in time to have the buildings completed before harvest"(Council Minutes, 1877, pg. 19b).

Committee hired "Mr. John Taylor, of Elora, to draw plans for the barn, and to superintend the erection of the buildings and fences, for \$285.00" and the construction contract was given to Richard Ferguson for the sum of \$1,483 as the lowest bidder (Council Minutes, 1877 pg. 16-17).

The purpose of the Barn and Industrial Farm was to produce enough food to feed the staff and the inmates at the Poor House and sell any surplus.

The Elora Lightning Express, published on October 4, 1877, gave a detailed description of the newly built structure, which was completed and opened the same day with the House of Industry and Refuge. "The barn is commodious, convenient, and up to the modern times in its interior arrangement.... It will amply accommodate all the products of the farm, and the root house contained in it will be found to be exceedingly useful."

An important renovation happened in 1909: "the cattle, stables and hog pens have been thoroughly overhauled during the year by placing concrete floors and feed mangers in same and fitting the stable with steel stalls and water bowls for the stock" (Council Minutes 1909, pg. 65).

The cost was \$313.83, divided between Beatty Brothers, for stable fixtures at \$85.13 with the balance of \$228.70 going to Charles Mattaini for concrete work, both from Fergus.

A bottom unloading Silo was built in 1915 and it was used to store livestock feed, a mix of whole-plant corn, dried hay and oats.

Another big expansion took place in 1937, when: "The stables at the barn were completely remodeled and enlarged and new steel equipment installed at a total cost of \$2,670.33. Purchased an additional 52 acres of land immediately adjoining the present farm on the North at a cost of



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\$2,500.00. On this land is a substantial stone house and a barn of little value” (Council minutes, January 1938 pg. 48 – 49).

More work was done in 1942, when “...the whole barn (was) re-shingled and the beam structure altered to permit of the easier and better handling of the hay and harvest. This work was completed at a cost of \$500.00” (Council Minutes, Inspector & Treasurer Report, January 1943).

In 1942 a Massey-Harris Rightway single unit milking machine was purchased, that put an end to the manual milking of the cows. This unit machine did not have a long life because, due to pasteurization regulations, the dairy cattle were sold and replaced with beef cattle in 1958. Wellington County Home for the Aged was closed in 1971 and Wellington County Museum opened on July 6, 1974.

New eavestroughs were installed on the Barn and a new roof was installed on the Silo between 1994 and 1995.

August 2011 marked another milestone in the history of the Barn. The Barn would become a public exhibit and rental facility space on a seasonal basis. The Barn was in remarkably good condition considering its age but some work was undertaken to meet Building Code requirements for the Barn’s new use.

The foundation was excavated and new drainage tiles were installed, interior walls were reinforced, and lighting was added. Heat and smoke detectors were installed and a ramp was added on the north side in order to provide access to the Barn. A new rough sawn pine floor was installed over the original floor to protect it.

The Dairy Barn reopened in July of 2017, after extensive renovations. It reflects the structure and the floorplan of the dairy operation in 1941.

Special group tours of the Barn, the Museum, and the Poor House Cemetery can be arranged for a nominal fee by contacting the Museum at 519.846.0916 x 5221.