

# THE GROUNDS

GET READY...EXPLORE



## Welcome

### WHERE TO BEGIN

Welcome to Beachville District Museum. This tour highlights the many attractions that are scattered across the 4.5 acres that make up our grounds. It provides an opportunity to learn about the geology and wildlife of the area, local quarries and mills, and historic farming equipment. It also covers elements of the museum's history, Beachville's railways and Oxford County's former toll roads.

You can begin your tour at the stone that rests on the front lawn, south of the main building. This stone used to sit at one of the oldest mills in Beachville, the Winlaw Mill. It marks a great starting point for the walking tour because it provides a clear view of the front façade of the museum.

### THE MUSEUM STONE



- Donated by Barb Winlaw (nee Lightheart)
- Carved by Ingersoll Memorials Ltd.
- Inscription funded by Marcia Smith
- Brought on-site by J & B Trucks and Cars



### FIRST TENANTS

This building was initially constructed as a single-storey stone dwelling for Philander King and his wife, Susanna Sophia Mabee, in 1851. Susanna had grown up in Oxford County. After the couple married, King took up work as a carpenter and joiner in Michigan. They moved back to Beachville in 1844 and bought the 21 acres at this property in February 1850. The land was purchased from Abraham Carroll. The Kings and their 8 children returned to Michigan in 1855.

## The Downing House

### A BUILDING IN STONE

In 1880, the house was purchased by John Downing, who managed the limestone quarries just north. Using the local limestone at his disposal, Mr. Downing added a second storey to the colourful fieldstone structure in 1902.

All of Southern Ontario was once covered by ice, and when the glaciers of the Pleistocene era retreated they left behind debris in great heaps called moraines. The stones churned up by the retreating glaciers were not conducive to farming, so early farmers spent much time and energy hauling them to the outer edges of their pastures. They were then used for building projects. If you walk closer to the building, you'll notice the "quarry-faced" or "rocky" aesthetic of the building's walls. Instead of presenting a flattened surface, the masons chose to embrace the natural texture of the stone.



### PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY FAÇADES

Start walking towards the parking lot and to the back of the house. Notice that the stones at the side of the house were fashioned into rectangles and aligned in clean rows. This side of the house faced the side road now known as Domtar Line and was therefore quite visible to passers-by.

When you examine the stonework at the back of the house, notice that it is rougher and more irregular in pattern. The individual stones remain angular or rounded at their edges. Less time was taken to achieve clean lines or edges because these walls made up what were considered secondary façades.





### THE ORCHARD

All of the land east of the house, leading to the side road used to be the Downing family's orchard. The Downings had fruits planted here and they would graze their horses inside the fence. Can you picture it? The horses in this image belonged to Charlie Downing, one of John and Henrietta Downing's sons.

## Ginkgo Biloba

### A BOTANICAL ODDITY

If you see a large tree with elegant, fan-shaped leaves, you've stumbled to the sole ginkgo tree on our property. In Japanese, "gin" means silver and "kyo" means apricot. Ginkgo trees were originally cultivated in Europe in the mid-18th century. These trees are known as living fossils because they've remained essentially unchanged for more than 200 million years. They represent one of the oldest types of trees in the world. Ginkgos are also dioecious, meaning there are separate male and female trees. In the east, the ginkgo's seeds are sought after for medicinal purposes. In the west, the leaves are used for a medicinal extract. Our tree is a male, because it does not produce any seeds in the fall. If you're walking back to the front of the house, look for the well at the base of the house's east wall and continue our tour...



### WELL-WATER AND BEACHVILLE'S AQUIFERS

Did you know that groundwater supplies greatly influenced how our province was settled? Pioneer communities developed around waterways like the Thames River and the Great Lakes System, but their growth depended on the presence of good aquifers.

As you pass by our well, imagine that it is used to extract drinking water from the ground. In 2017, there were approximately 1610 private wells on record in the Ingersoll Corridor Watershed. Groundwater is a precious resource for rural families and businesses.



## THE WINLAW MILL

The mills in Beachville were initially owned by Abraham Beach, after whom Beachville is named. They were operated by Walter Francis Winlaw between 1921 and 1966. Both the sawmill and the gristmill (for grains) were originally powered by water rushing along the Thames River. You can see, in this picture, a millstone standing out front.

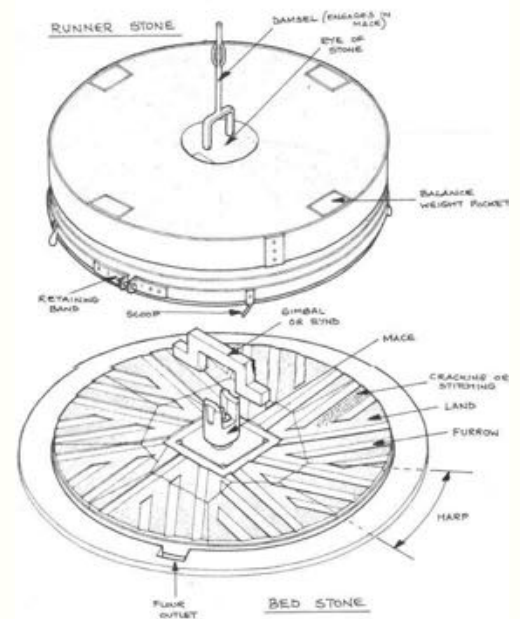


# Millstones

## TRACES OF THE GRISTMILL

Gristmills were designed for grinding grain into flour. Farmers would come into town with their grist and wait for it to be ground down, sometimes stopping for other errands in the Village. These grinding stones, or burrstones, are remnants of the mill. They are bound together with iron bands. The stone closest to the house operated as the "runner stone" and would have rotated atop a fixed "bed stone" below. The bed stone had furrows (or grooves) that acted as cutting edges. You can find the bed stone, now, in the garden closer to the road. Look for some traces of the furrows when you locate it.

After you have reached the millstone garden, continue walk towards the stone pillars near the main road.



## BEACHVILLE ROCKS

These stones are not the only ones you'll find on our grounds. Every so often, the Beachville Rocks group from the Village will paint us some beautiful rocks and hide them around the grounds. On Easter you might find rocks painted like eggs or bunnies. On Earth Day,

you might come across ones that look like planet Earth, a lady bug or a human cell. We encourage you to hunt for these; even move them around for others to find. Snap a picture and tag the museum or #Beachvillerocks on social media. Enjoy the hunt while visiting.





## Beachville Road

### ONCE HOME TO AN ELECTRIC RAILWAY

The main road, along which the museum sits, was once known as Highway 2. It is now called Beachville Road or County Road 9. The road provides an east-west corridor between Ingersoll and Woodstock and was once a thoroughfare for a streetcar track. The Woodstock, Thames Valley and Ingersoll Electric Railway was established to offer transportation on the south side of the road. Land was expropriated in the late 1800s and the tracks were laid between 1900 and 1901. The Estelle trolley made its first trip from Woodstock in 1900. It had a seating capacity of 24 and a vestibule at either end. The fare to ride was a nickel each way. Over 110 000 passengers used the railway in its first year of operation. The most popular stops along the route were Fairmount and Riverside Parks east of Beachville. The parks boasted a ballpark, swings, food booths and pavilions. To continue the tour, turn back towards the main building and walk towards the porch ramp.

### PAVING IN THE 1920s

During the era of the streetcars, Beachville Road was gravel. In the 1920s, the fares for riding the railway were raised, the roads were paved and more people began driving automobiles to get from place to place. You can see an image of the paving crew below. The railway along this road fell silent in August of 1925. The tracks were pulled up in 1928.



### NORLOCH FARM

If you're looking across Beachville Road, you'll see a house directly across the way. It used to belong to Charles Downing. Charlie grew up in the Downing House (now the museum) as a child. He founded two of the main quarries in Beachville - Beachville White Lime and Innerkip Lime and Stone. When he decided to

retire, he moved to this property across the street from his childhood home. He began raising Holsteins on the farm, called Norloch Farm, which he shared with his wife Hildred. Hildred was fond of painting, and depicted Norloch farm as one of her subjects. Her painting of the property remains in the museum's collection.



### UNION SCHOOL BELL (1885-1913)

The school bell west of the museum came from the First Union School (No. 68). The school was built on land donated by Ben Thompson and served pupils from School Sections #3 and #5 (both North Oxford and West Oxford). The bell would have hung inside the schoolhouse's belfry (see the tower in the image below). It was used to call students into school as well as to alert the community to various news or happenings.



## The First Recorded Game

### COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE

This plaque commemorates the first-recorded game of baseball played in North America. The game was played in Beachville on June 4th, 1838 to celebrate Militia Muster Day and King George III's birthday. A team from the Village faced off against players from Zorra. Bats were made of cedar and the balls were made of bound-up wool covered in calf-skin. The ballfield was nothing more than a grassy pasture. An account of how and where the game was played was written in *Sporting Life* magazine by Dr. Adam Enoch Ford. Ford had played in the game as a child and recollected many of the players who were present and the rules that were followed. His record allows us to better appreciate how the game of baseball has evolved. This plaque was erected at Ye Olde Museum in 1990, a few years after celebrations of the 150th anniversary. It was moved to this location in 1991 or 1992.

### SPRING-TIME BLOOMS

Daffodils and hyacinths bloom at the road and in the crux of the museum building, beside the porch and the 1992 addition. These bulbs were purchased from Backyard by Design using funds raised by the Beachville District Historical Society's Outreach Committee in 2019.

Over 200 bulbs were planted in the fall during a "Daffy Day" event. They add the first bit of colour to the grounds in the spring, before the tulips, crab apple trees, red flowering quince and ornamental pear trees bloom. In early summer, look for beautiful blooms on the tulip tree near the walkway or irises at the porch.





### THE 1992-1993 ADDITION

If you look to the west side of the Downing House, where the porch wraps around to a second entrance, you will see where an addition was added in 1992 and 1993. This project was largely volunteer run. It resulted in an extension of the stone basement and caused the window of the sewing room to be sealed off. You can see a photograph of the roof being installed in the fall of 1993. The space that was created is still used for programs such as summer camp and our speaker series.

## 1990s Building Projects

### THE GAZEBO & THE BARN

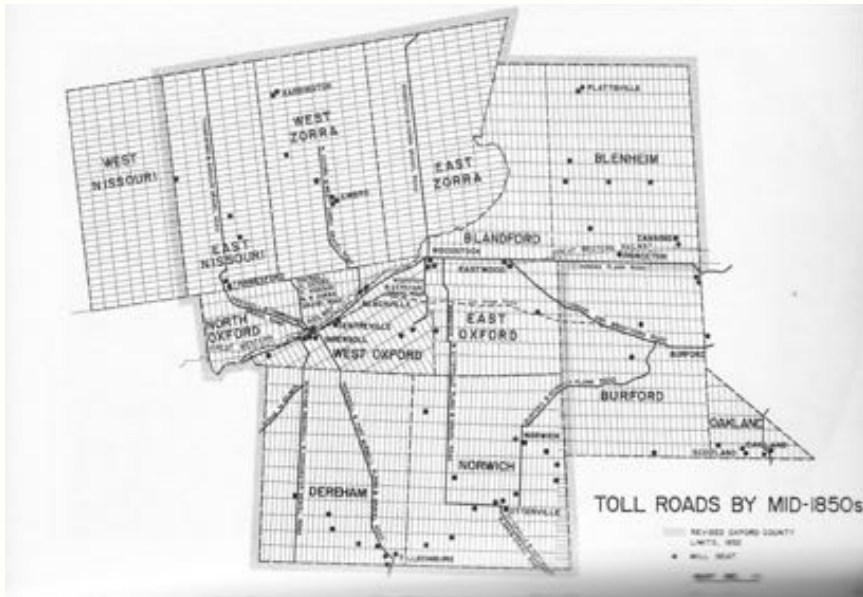
The grounds, today, reflect hours upon hours of volunteer work. In March of 1992, Pal J. Seys Ltd. had the gazebo roof delivered to the grounds. Volunteers - George Sandham, Ben McFarland, Barry MacKay, James Parsons, and Ceriel Seys - helped lift it onto its base. Late in the summer of 1992, the barn was erected just west of the garage (see image above). The opening of the Agricultural Annex at the museum was hosted on October 24th of 1992, Jim Riddick was the Chairman of the Beachville District Historical Society at the time. Mayor Ernie Hardeman attended the opening, as did Howard Cook, Ward 7 Councillor. Wally Hammond represented Zorra Township during the opening ceremonies and Ed Down spoke as the Oxford County Warden. MPP, Kimble Sutherland was also in attendance. These structures transformed the Downing residence into a museum site.



### MIGRATORY BIRDS

If you look up at the centre of the gazebo or at the beams of the shed, you may notice some muddy, circular structures or bound up grasses. These are birds' nests. The museum's grounds are home to barn swallows, Baltimore orioles and robins, amongst other migratory birds. Barn swallows make their nests out of

mud mixed with grass stems. These are commonly fixed to human-made structures (i.e. eaves, sheds). Swallows fly in from Central and South America for a breeding season in Ontario in the spring, and they return to the same nesting spot every year. Our grounds are ideal for barn swallows that feed on flying insects by the creek.



## THE HISTORY OF TOLL ROADS

Through the middle part of the 19th century, roads in Oxford County were privately owned. Local farmers, whose properties lined the roads maintained them of their own expense; taxes were not yet collected and utilized for road building or road maintenance. The farmers, therefore collected tolls for the use of their roads to cover their costs. Toll booths like the red and white building near the garage, were erected along major routes and travellers had to stop and pay the toll before continuing.

## Toll Booth

### ALL THE WAY FROM DICKSON'S CORNER

On a single horse, a traveller was charged 5 cents for one way. With a team of horses the toll was 10 cents for one way and 16 cents for a return trip on the same day.

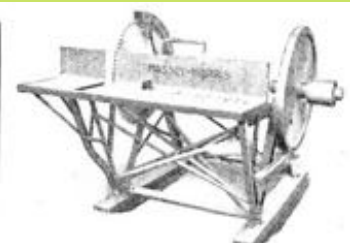
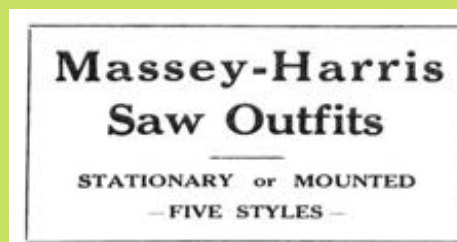
Toll roads had tollgates or bars that swung down over the road until the fixed toll was paid. Individuals going to church, funerals and ministers were not required to pay. The windows at the sides of the booth allowed the "keeper" to see approaching traffic and swing the bar across the road. This toll booth was located at Dickson's Corner on Highway #119. The toll road era ended in 1904, when Municipal Council bought the roads and started the County Road System, eliminating the gates.

Behind the toll booth, you'll find the museum's fire pit, a groundhog's burrow entrance and another outdoor artifact.



## MASSEY-HARRIS BUZZ SAW

The green, cordwood saw tucked between two trees was used to chop firewood both on the farm and in the woodlot. It was manufactured by *Massey-Harris Limited* in the early 1900s. At that time, Massey-Harris was the largest agricultural equipment manufacturer in the British Empire. See their name on the saw's flywheel.







## GEORGE HOGG & SONS LTD.

This sign recalls the Thamesford Mill, a former focal point of the village of Thamesford. The first mill at the site was built in 1845. After being destroyed by fire, it was replaced by a brick building in 1898. The mill changed names several times from Finkle's Mill to Cawthorpe's Mill and, eventually, Hogg's Mill. At the height of operation, the mill had four floors of machinery and countless line shafts, belts and pulleys. It produced up to 400, 98-pound bags of flour per day on waterpower.

## The Open Shed

### TILLAGE TOOLS & SOWING EQUIPMENT

Many of the tools in this shed were designed to prepare the soil on farm fields for crops. Whether they were designed to dig, stir or overturn the soil, they agitated it more efficiently than did early hand tools like picks, hoes and rakes. A field is tilled before seeds are planted. Look for the "Eureka" potato planter with a toolbox at the front and two fertilizer attachments on top (by the driver's seat. This piece would have been horse drawn).

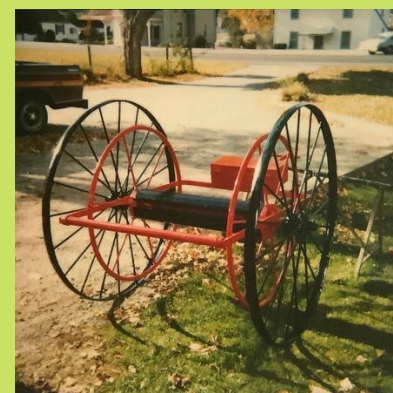
The shed also includes some harvesting machines, like mowers and dump rakes. Mowers replaced the scythe for cutting hay in the 1850s and dump rakes, with their curved steel teeth and lever-operated lifting mechanisms, were invented in the 1870s and replaced hand raking.



### EQUIPMENT FROM THE CEMENT PLANTS

Hidden amidst the farming tools are a few pieces of equipment belonging to the aggregate industry. At the back of the shed you will find 2 Gasboy gas pumps that were used at Lafarge. The red was for regular gas and green was for diesel. The pumps exhibit a box-like design that was common in the 1950s. They were made

in London. The shed also holds two red-and-black, fire hose reels. These were used at Canada Cement and were restored by George Sandham.





### THE EUCLID TRUCK

The Euclid rock hauler was used between 1950 and 1972 for active quarrying and stripping at Chemical Lime Limited. It featured a 165 horsepower, Cummins, 6 cylinder, diesel engine and weighs 32 700 pounds when empty. It is estimated that this truck moved about 5.1 million tons of soil and stone from the quarries in Beachville. It was donated to Ye Olde Museum by Stelco Steel and restored by Sheridan Equipment Ltd. The image on the left shows the truck before restoration.

## Graders Galore

### RUSSEL, RICHARDSON & AUSTIN-WESTERN

On our grounds, you'll find several road graders. These machines represent the shift from road machinery that was pulled by horses or tractors, to engine-powered models. The yellow grader was manufactured by the Russell Grading Company in 1922. This grader was designed to be pulled by a tractor, but could still rely on horses to power it. The blade at the bottom of the grader was used to scrap up the dirt on the road. This grader was used at Stelco (the quarry closest to Ingersoll) and belonged to Zorra Township. The larger red grader is a Model 99 manufactured by the Austin-Western Company. Founded in 1877 in Aurora, Illinois, the Austin-Western Company was one of the earliest companies to manufacture horse-drawn road graders. The 99 was the first motor grader with fully-hydraulic blade control. It was equipped with both a vee snow plow and a snow wing.



### FOSSIL FUN

If you look down into the west lawn, you'll see a limestone amphitheatre. This is a great place to sit, relax and soak up some sun. Get up close to the armor stones and study the rocks. Can you see the different types of fossils - those of marine animals and of corals? These fossils, during the Devonian period were

sea creatures. When the creatures died, their bodies settled to the bottom of the sea and became compressed over time, forming the sedimentary rock.







## The Creek Trails

### ADVENTURE CONTINUES OVER THE BRIDGE

This creek is part of the Thames River watershed. It flows north and spills back into the river, past the rail bridge. This watercourse provides habitat for aquatic and semi-aquatic species such as reptiles, amphibians, birds, plants and insects. So while you're exploring keep a look out for wildlife and exercise care for nature. If you look near the bridge in the summer, you'll encounter a number of water striders (Gerridae), garden snails (Gastropods) and butterflies. Continue over the bridge and hike our set of trails. Go north along the rail line, or wind by the creek. Find the cool shade and soft needled floor of the cedar grove at the northwest corner of the property. If you keep on the trail, you will end up at our second wooden bridge near the far-west side of the grounds. Pop back across the lawn and stop where you like for a moment of reflection at our memorial trees.

### THE RAILWAY

The Great Western Railway was the first to come through Oxford County. It opened in December of 1853 and ran for 229 miles between Niagara Falls and Detroit. The rails hugged the north bank of the Thames River between Woodstock and Ingersoll and brought a tremendous amount of business and trade through the area. The Grand Trunk Railway acquired the line in 1882, and it became the Canadian National Railway (CNR) in 1923. The trains come through several times a day. You may just catch sight of a restored engine if you are patient. For your safety, please do not trespass on railway property.



### LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

For thousands of years aboriginal peoples have lived along the Thames River. Seasonal sites were established along the Thames River Valley between 300 B.C. and 800 A.D. The groups made use of the fertile valley soil, developed fishing sites and travelled along the river. Beachville District Museum occupies land on

the traditional territory of the Anishnabek, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), Ojibway/Chippewa peoples. As settlers we are grateful for the opportunity to enjoy these grounds and recognize the generations of people who have taken care of this land - for thousands of years.

## Memorial Trees

The museum grounds include all types of trees from tulip and walnut trees to pear and maple trees. Through the memorial tree program, we remember several long-time residents of Beachville as well as a number of our museum's most fervent supporters. Sit near the oak and beech trees, or flowering crabs and learn more about these individuals and the lives they lived in the Beachville area.

### MARY GRAHAM (NEE DOWNING)

Mary was born on December 6th, 1896. She grew up on this property and attended Beachville Public School and Victory Memorial School as a child. As a young woman, she worked at the Beachville White Lime offices. She was an active member of the Beachville Baptist Church - teaching Sunday school and playing the organ there for over 45 years. Mary was heavily involved in seeing the Downing family's history documented and the museum opened. She passed at Ingersoll Alexandra Hospital on January 13th, 1995.



### RALPH KILCUP

Ralph Kilcup was born in Amherst, Nova Scotia on September 3rd, 1908. He worked in Boston at the Waltham Clock Company and later at the Debert Air Force base during World War II. Ralph married Marion Downing on April 3rd, 1948. He was a member of the Beachville Baptist Church and the Courtright Masonic Lodge and worked in construction at Sarnia for a time. He faced many years of heart trouble before passing in 1973.



### THOMAS DOWNING

Thomas Downing Sr. was born at East Dyke in the Clovelly, a village in the southwest of England. He completed an apprenticeship in lime burning as a young man, and married Elizabeth Johns in 1842. Thomas and his family immigrated to Canada in 1851. It is presumed that he knew the Thames River Valley would yield limestone when he settled in the Beachville area. He went on to establish some of the earliest limestone quarries and lime kilns in Oxford County. Thomas and Elizabeth had 8 children. He retired from the quarry business in the late 1880s, and handed his businesses onto his son, John. He remained active in the community and at the Beachville Baptist Church until he passed away in the year 1900.

### ELIZABETH DOWNING (NEE JOHNS)

Elizabeth Downing was the third child of William Johns and Mary (Pickard) Johns. She married Thomas Downing on April 7th, 1942 in Parkham, England. She was heavily involved in the Beachville Baptist Church. She'd been baptized in the Thames River in 1866. She died in March of 1885 and is buried at the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery.

### WALTER TODD

Generations of the Todd family have resided in the Beachville area. Walter Todd worked for North American Cyanamid in Beachville through the 1950s. His niece, Kathleen Todd, was a family friend of Marion



(Downing) Kilcup, a former local historian of Beachville. Walter was a supporter of the museum and was on-site when it first opened to the public in April of 1992. In 1997, he passed away at the age of 97, and is buried at the Beachville Cemetery.



## Memorial Trees

### HARLEY & PHYLLIS COUSINS

After earning her nursing certification through St. Joseph's Hospital in 1941, Phyllis Marjorie Bieber worked as a Registered Nurse at Alexandra Hospital in Ingersoll.



It is here where she met her future husband, Harley, while he was a patient. After they married, they lived in London, where Harley was stationed with the RCA, during World War II. In 1946, the couple returned to Harley's childhood home on Zorra Line with their two young daughters. Harley and Phyllis were very involved in the Beachville community-especially in activities with the United Church. Both remained at the Cousins 150-year homestead until their deaths; Harley at the age of 49 in 1963 and Phyllis in 2006.

### KAY & DON GERMAN

The German family has resided in the Beachville area for many generations. Don grew up in Beachville and attended Beachville Public School. Kay was born in Chatham and grew up near Tillsonburg. The couple met around 1940 at a dance in Port Burwell. They married in 1942. Don worked for Shell Industries and Kay worked for Sutherland's in Woodstock. Their daughter Linda commemorated her parents with this tree.



### PETER GRAHAM

Peter was born in Helmsdale, Scotland. At the age of 12 he moved to Beachville with his family. They lived across the street from the Beachville Baptist Church. During World War I, Peter served in Russia then went on to work at the Bank of Montreal in Beachville. He, like his wife Mary, was a founding member of the Lawn Tennis Club. Peter also belonged to the Masonic Lodge in Ingersoll, the Legion and the Kiwanis Club.



### CHARLIE DOWNING

Charlie grew up on this property and was a founder and manager of Beachville White Lime Co. and Innerkip Lime & Stone. He remained an involved member of these family businesses until 1945.



Charlie was passionate about farming and raising cattle during his retirement. Charlie managed the Beachville Orioles softball team, leading them to a provincial championship in the 1920s. He acted as president of the Rural Hockey Association of Ontario and director of the Oxford District Cattle Breeders Association. Charlie was a member of the St. John's Masonic Lodge in Ingersoll and the Woodstock Rotary Club. He passed away at Woodstock General Hospital on November 13th, 1957 at the age of 70.

### HILDRED DOWNING

Hildred was the only daughter of Helen and John Manson. She was raised at her home, "Sunny Cryst", in East Oxford. She married Charlie Downing in 1917 and moved to Woodstock.

Hildred was active in the Beachville Baptist Church and worked with Ladies Aid, serving as the Director of Oxford/Brant Baptist Missions. She took on the role of President with the Lady Dufferin Chapter of the I.O.D.E., Ingersoll and was a member of the Women's



Auxiliary to Alexandria Hospital in Ingersoll. She lived on Beachville Road at Norlock Farm (just across from the museum) until she passed away in March of 1963. Hildred and Charlie had one daughter, Marion (nee Downing) Kilcup.