

## OLDCASTLE

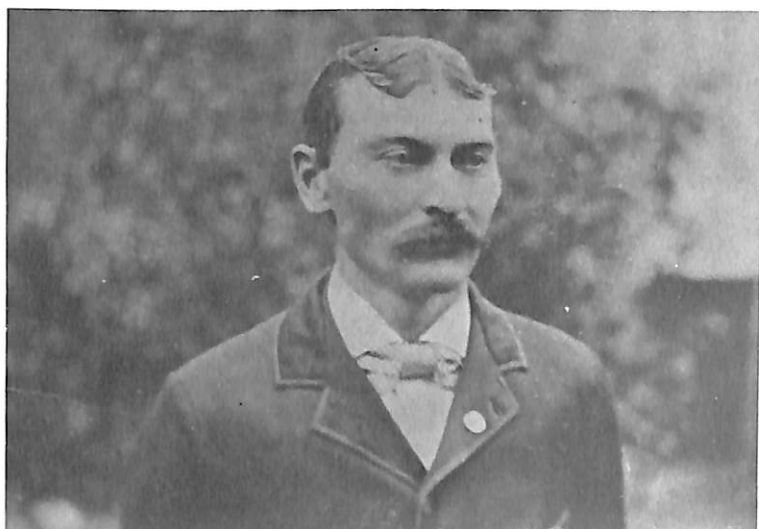
The Talbot Trail gave rise to another community in Sandwich South located eight miles east of Windsor, and four miles west of Maidstone. This settlement is the hamlet of Oldcastle. Once again, when searching the lists of Oldcastle residents, one finds names denoting the importance of Irish blood in the settling of Sandwich South. O'Brien, O'Neil, Kavanaugh, Halford, Sullivan, Sexton, McCarthy, Beahan, McKee, are all remaining descendents of an indelible line of Irish settlers.

Cornelius Beahan who lived on Highway #3 near Oldcastle, states that the first recorded settler in the community was a Squire Cornelius Downey, and that the community got its name from Oldcastle in County Meath, Ireland.

The post office was established early in Oldcastle, being put into operation in 1862 with Michael McCarthy as the first postmaster. Mr. McCarthy remained the postmaster until 1912 when he died at the age of 80. The post office was located in a building across from the old Sandwich South township hall. This same structure, besides housing the post office, was as well a hotel also owned by Mr. McCarthy. This was generally the centre of action in Oldcastle for some time. Even the first council meetings of Sandwich South township, itself, were held in the bar of the hotel until the hall was erected.

Later the post office was moved to the home of George Welsh on the Seventh Concession, (or Oldcastle Road) with Mr. Welsh being Postmaster. The office was then again moved, this time to the home of Frank Lounsborough in Paquette, Frank serving as Postmaster; and then it was moved to the gas station and store of John Prieur, also in Paquette.

The office was finally returned to oldcastle itself on March 1, 1947, and operate from the Kavanaugh's China Shop with Mrs. Kavanaugh as the Postmistress until she retired. Eventually, the post office landed itself at the present location on Walker Road, and Marilyn Martin is the capable Postmistress at the time of writing.



*George Welsh was the second man to hold the position of Postmaster of Oldcastle, doing so in the early 1900's.*



*He was also the gravedigger of St. Stephen's Anglican Church where he is seen here in his place of employment, the St. Stephen's Cemetery. George Welsh died on November 29, 1940 at the age of 73.*

Oldcastle was another 'rest-station' on the Talbot Trail and had toll gates in its midst, originally located on the north-east corner where the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway intersects with Highway #3, until they were burnt down in 1896.

However, the most significant factor to Oldcastle development was the laying of the Lake Erie, Essex, and Detroit River Railway by Hiram Walker in 1888, which became the Pere Marquette Railroad in 1903 and the Chesapeake and Ohio in more recent years.

With the formation of this railway, Oldcastle began to expand, becoming, amongst other things, an important grain shipping depot. The Oldcastle

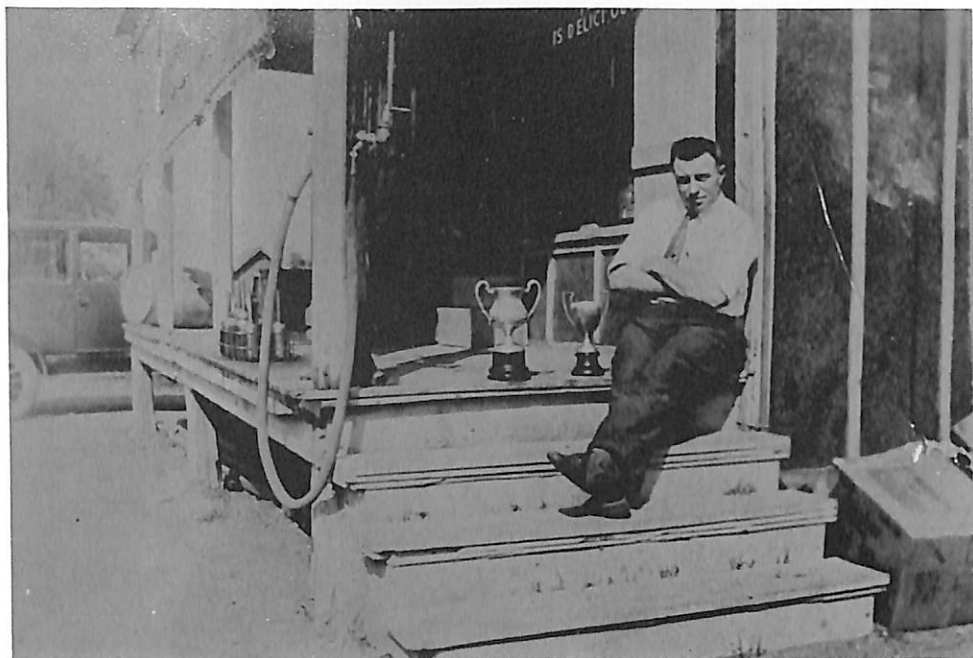
Farmers Cooperative and grain mill, was created in the 1920's, under the management of Walter Jessop. Originally the Cooperative's main concern was livestock and the grinding of grain with their newly built grist mill. Later the grain storage elevator came in the 1950's and in 1975 the 'Co-op' was sold to the United Co-operatives of Ontario; and since then has continued to expand.

*The Hamlet boasts the biggest farm supply and grain marketing and retail outlet of the seven UCO branches in Essex County.*

*Its sales volume registers in the millions of dollars. And with 700 members, mostly area farmers, and 10 employees [1983] it ranks among the largest of all the UCO branches from London to Windsor.*

*The elevator has a capacity to store 185,000 bushels at any one time, but handles in total a million bushels a year. \*83*

*The Oldcastle Farmer's Co-operative:*



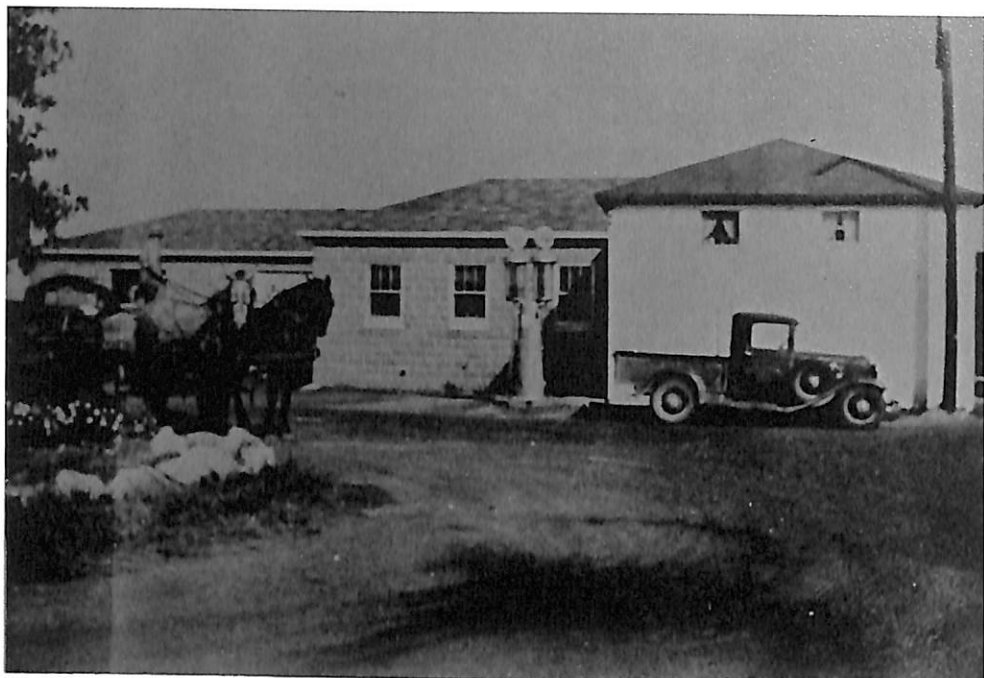
*Walter Jessop sitting on the porch of the original co-op building, probably in the 1930's. Mr. Jessop was the manager of the 'co-op' at its inception in the 1920's.*



*Walter Jessop [right] sitting on the Co-op's first truck in the 1920's.*



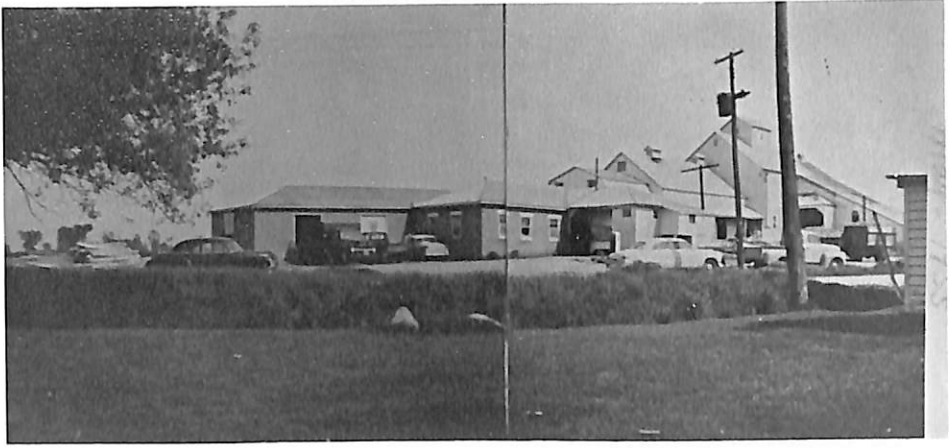
*Original Co-op buildings. Note the old water wagon beside the building, to the left, used for emergencies or fire.*



*Local farm produce arriving at the Oldcastle co-op buildings.*

*The Oldcastle Farmer's Co-operative in the 1950's.*





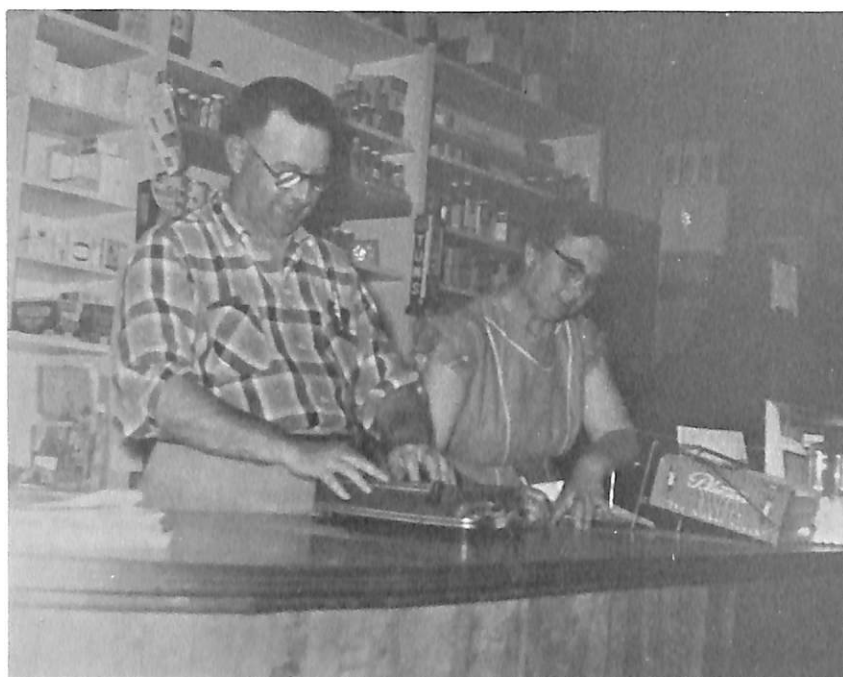
*The newly expanded co-op buildings in the mid 1950's.*



*The Oldcastle Farmer's Co-operative truck*



*The co-op coal bin*



*Carson and Opal Jessop inside the Co-op store in 1959.*

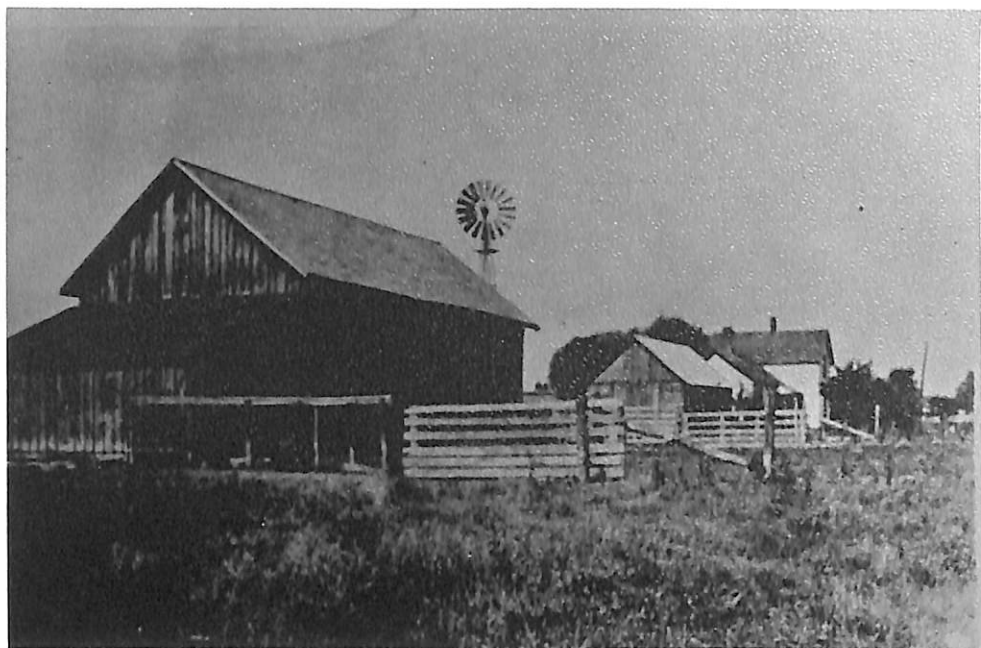


In 1890 the hamlet had listed a population of only 20. The businesses recorded for this same year were: the hotel and post office owned by Michael McCarthy; a wagon-maker by the name of S. Duke; a blacksmith shop operated by A. Napier; and another hotel owned by J. Williams; illustrative of the notion that the great majority of activity in Oldcastle was transient. Travellers heading for city markets and country resorts, passed through Oldcastle in both directions. It therefore evolved into the last point of rest and relaxation before either heading on through the dusty roads of Essex County from Windsor, or conversely, heading from the calm of country roads into the growing and bustling town of Windsor beyond.

For both Oldcastle and Maidstone a great deal of their original fervour and zeal was embodied in the several taverns and hotels to be found in either centre. Apparently however, for most of the two towns' local residents, such carousing and drunken mischief as was created by the hotels was reason enough to push for a prohibition of liquor. Thus in 1910 on January 4, the residents of Sandwich South voted with a majority of 254 to a minority of 111 for the 'local option' of remaining a 'dry' community. All of the hotels in the township famed for their earlier 'wildlife' quickly disappeared. The township actually remained 'dry' until February 10, 1965 when another vote disclosed the wishes of the residents to become 'wet' once again.



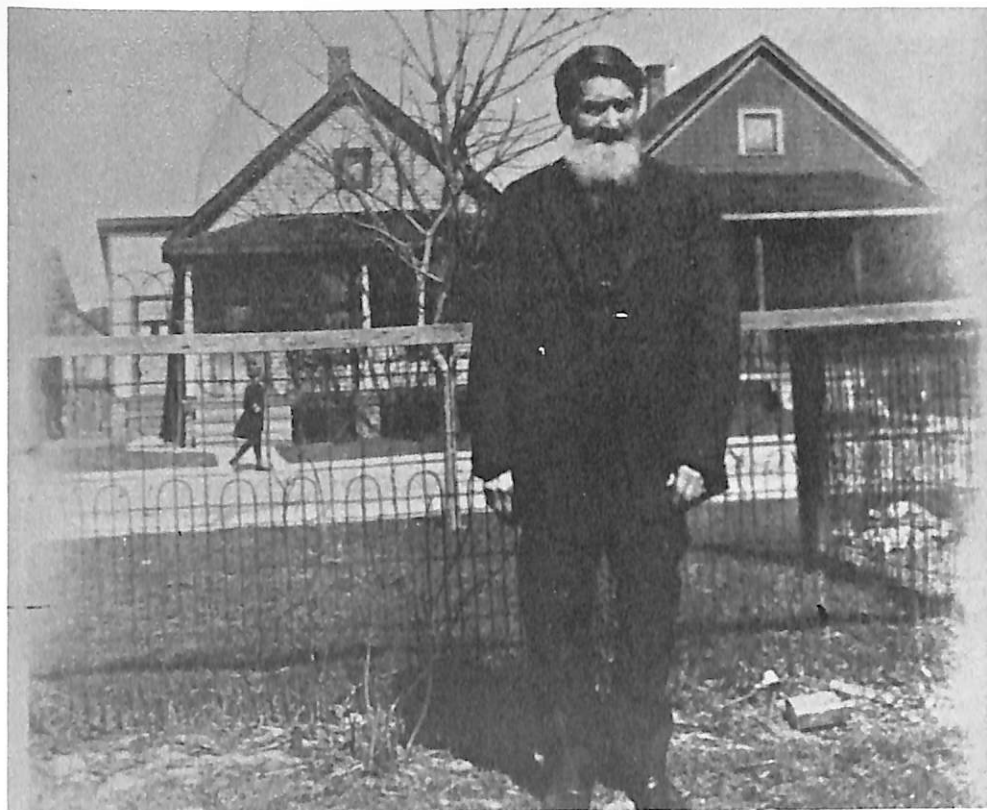
*Homestead and farm of Joseph LePain, established on March 31, 1885, and seen here as it appeared in 1927. The homestead was situated on the Talbot Road near what is now the Victoria Memorial Cemetery.*



*In April 1927 the farm was sold to Stanley J. Anstey of Detroit who converted the house into a famous roadhouse named the "Yellow Lantern". However, with "local option" making the township 'dry' in 1910, the roadhouse faltered, and in 1931 the farm was returned to the LePain family. The original house which had held the tavern burnt down on August 10, 1933.*

At the turn of the century a familiar face to be spied making his way throughout the area on foot was Cornelius Danaher. Originally settling near Maidstone, Cornelius was never home enough it seems, to know it. Danaher was what is remembered as a 'pack pedlar'. With his bachelor brother James, Mr. Danaher roamed about the countryside from Maidstone to as far away as Jackson's Corners, (Roseland) selling a wide assortment of a family's basic necessities from a large pack on his back. Thread, needles, pins, men's and ladies' small accessories, homestead articles, pencils, pens, penpoints, mitts, caps, and even a bit of 'Rundles Liniment' were all the small essentials which made him a welcome sight to area farmers. It was a large advantage not to have to run to the corner store, possibly five or six miles away, in order to get the same 'goods' which Cornelius brought right to your door! The Danahers were enterprising young men and would simply settle for the night wherever they happened to find themselves at the end of a long day's walk. Often they would make temporary stay-overs with local relatives and when not 'packing', would help with farm chores, or chop wood.



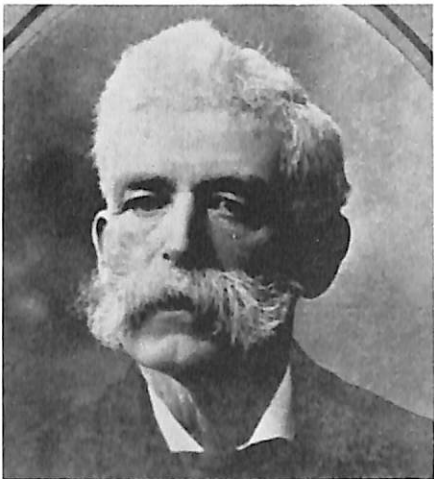


*Cornelius Danaher, a "pack pedlar" of Sandwich South who travelled around the township in the late 1800's selling wares from a pack on his back.*

One of the prominent families of Oldcastle are the O'Neils. The founding member of the O'Neil family in Sandwich South was Alexander O'Neil (I), who came to Canada in 1821 and settled in Sandwich South.

Included in his children was another Alexander O'Neil (II), who stayed for a while on the old homestead and then purchased his own farm on Talbot Road in Sandwich South, where he stayed until his death in 1891. This Alexander O'Neil (II) had nine children which in fact, included yet a third Alexander O'Neil born on November 9, 1843; his mother being the daughter of John and Mary Shuel, early pioneers of the area. This third Alexander O'Neil (III) remained on his father's homestead until his marriage to Barbara Vollans in 1868, another daughter of area pioneers.

After their marriage Alexander (III) purchased a 360 acre tract of wild land on South Talbot, just west of Walker Road. He then engaged in the lumber business, and the buying and selling of livestock; an enterprise carried on later by his grandson Hugh O'Neil Sr. Alexander O'Neil (III) was also assessor of Sandwich South for a year, and spent sixteen years as trustee, secretary, and treasurer of the local school board. His leisure time, what little of it there was, was spent in game hunting in the northern counties.



*Mr. Alexander O'Neil III born in Sandwich South on November 9, 1843.*



*Alexander O'Neil, seen here with his family outside of the original O'Neil homestead, established by this man's grandfather in 1821.*

*Pictured left to right are:*

- Maggie [Mrs. Henry Banwell]*
- Eugene*
- Mrs. O'Neil*
- Mellie [Mrs. Garnet Webster]*
- Elmer*
- George*
- Harry*
- Alexander O'Neil [with gun]*
- Marnie*
- Frank*
- Fred*
- Lionel*



[Hugh O'Neil]

*Mr. Alexander O'Neil III outside of Banwell's Harness shop on Pitt Street in Windsor, having just returned from one of his "gaming" expeditions. Several Sandwich South men went with him on this particular trip for included in the picture are:*

*Alex O'Neil - 2nd from left with dog and gun  
Herb O'Neil - 5th from left with foot on deer  
Henry Vollans - 6th from left in front with dog looking left  
William White - 7th from left in front with dog looking right  
George Shuel - first from right in back behind pole  
Donald Banwell - 2nd from right with gun resting on shoe.*



*Frank O'Neil, the son of Alexander O'Neil III, here seen on his own property located on South Talbot just west of Walker Road. Hugh O'Neil Sr. is the son of Frank O'Neil, and still resides on the homestead lands of his father.*



*Mr. Hugh O'Neil Sr. [centre] seen here with his two sisters, Dorothy [left] and Gretta [right], in front of his father's [Frank O'Neil] homestead. The farm was established in 1895.*

In the 1920's Oldcastle furthered its 'crossroads' status when Walker Road was extended out from the 3rd Concession, running north of the airport, and was built across Highway #2 to follow the Seventh Concession running south, also crossing the Talbot Road (H #3) at Oldcastle. The road was extended to accommodate the increased traffic in the area produced by the booming east Windsor 'Ford City'. Car manufacturing was in full production in the twenties, and many farmers commuted into the city to work at the factory. The corner of Walker and Highway #3 surrounded by the Oldcastle community, has remained one of the busiest corners in the township. Its present purpose is not yet far removed from its original one, and commuters pouring in from all over the county find their paths meeting here before reaching Windsor and their city jobs.