

Education in Eramosa:

Part 1 - Exploring Farmer Tim's Historic Barns

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Foreword written and edited by Mikayla Barney

In this month's blog post, we have an article written by Emma Rutledge, who is a history student at University of Guelph. Experiential learning is a great way for students to get out of the classroom and develop real-world skills informed by their studies. OBP was thrilled to partner with the University of Guelph to do a survey on Farmer Tim's barn in Eramosa, Ontario. Follow along on Emma's experience to learn more about historic barns!

Earlier this month in June 2023, I had the pleasure of walking through two beautiful barns in Eramosa, Wellington County. This tour, guided by OBP's President, Hugh Fraser, marked the beginning of a 12-week Experiential Learning course I and one other student were participating in this summer at the University of Guelph.

We were given the task of collecting data from barns across Ontario in an effort to preserve their histories. We used a survey developed by Hugh, professor Kimberly Martin, Randy Bagg, and 3 former students to conduct the research. The introduction to this process began on June 10, when we were given the exciting opportunity to visit the property of Farmer Tim.



*Caption: Photograph of Tim May's large post and beam barn in Eramosa, Ontario, Canada.
Taken in June 2023.*

When we arrived at Tim's property, one of Ontario's 3,213 active dairy farms, we were immediately greeted by his animals. A curious Belted Galloway, an acrobatic cat and 2 fainting goats who were luckily not spooked by our presence! Although I predict the dairy barns in which Farmer Tim operates will one day be admired for their longevity, it was the 2 barns on his neighbouring property that were of particular interest to us.



*Caption: Inside one of the barns at Farmer Tim's property in Eramosa, Ontario, Canada.
Taken in June 2023.*

The first barn we tackled was the largest and youngest of the two, likely constructed between 1850 and 1899. As seen in the photo, this structure has a heavy timber frame with a lower-level stable that still houses cattle to this day.

The first settler in Eramosa Township, John Harris, built a small shanty in 1821, followed by Col. Henry Strange in 1840. It wasn't until the 1850's that an agricultural community in this region started to form. This barn, in the excellent condition which it stands, offers us a remarkable example of an early settler barn.

During our visit, we admired its interior and learned from Hugh, the original function of each space. As someone who has very little experience with barns (for now!) I found it fascinating to get a chance to see the granary, as well as the old hayfork and trolley.

As we stood in the barn immersed in the history of these old rooms, I couldn't help but wonder what it might have looked like - in its *hay* day.

Our tour through the first barn was all about getting familiar with common features and learning how to navigate the survey. It was great to have Hugh there sharing his wisdom, but also comforting to know that the images and descriptions provided in the survey will be a helpful guide when we eventually take on the challenge independently.

The scavenger hunt continued when we entered the second barn, confirmed by Farmer Tim to have likely been built around 1840. Although challenging to determine the exact purpose of

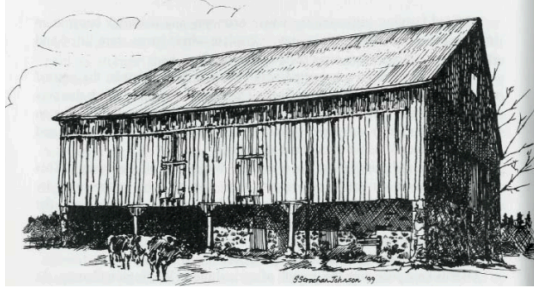
each room, our search for clues led to some interesting findings, including antique hardware and some embrasures found on the stone walls of the barn.



Caption: (Image, left) Wood cladding of original wall. (Image, right) The Outside of Farmer Tim's oldest barn built in 1840, including stone addition.

Barn embrasures are narrow, vertical slit openings in a stone wall to allow some air ventilation exchange. This stone structure piqued our interest the most. Initially we assumed it was the oldest part of the barn, but with some investigation we realized that it might have been an addition to the red timber frame structure. In the photo you can see where Hugh was able to find possible fragments of the original cladding on the outer wall of the red timber frame, where it met the stone addition. By peeling back the layers and looking closer, we were able to gain some insights into this barn's evolution through time.

These observations of physical traits reveal more about the history of the barn and the region. Further research and digging reveals that these barns are similar to the Pennsylvania Barn, a type of barn design brought over by German-American settlers between the 1790's and 1900's. This design featured a banked location with a protruding second story forebay which overhangs the first floor. These barns often have stone foundations with stone gable ends. Often these barns were built on slopes, of which many could be found in Wellington. Feed was stored above and dropped from the overhang to a sheltered feedlot outside.



The Pennsylvania overhang afforded a sheltered feedlot outside for cattle;
pen and ink sketch by Susan Strachan Johnson.



Caption: (Image, left) Wellington County History, Volume 12 1999, article by Greg Oaks. Barns In Wellington. Pen and ink sketch by Susan Strachan Johnson.

After completing both surveys, we all gained a lot of valuable experience not only exploring barns, but also conducting the survey. Although we still have a lot to learn, I feel much more confident in the process. I look forward to visiting more of these incredible buildings and meeting the people who are actively contributing to their rich history, and now preservation!

Thank you for reading OBP's Blog! If you are interested in learning more about historic barns, you can follow us on Instagram as @ontbarn

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