



MILK STAND



The occasional milk stand along the road, at the end of a farm lane, and the rare remnants of a country cheese factory, are all that remain as reminders that cheddar cheese was once one of Canada's most valuable export commodities. The great cheese producing era ran from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s. At its peak, Hastings County was recognized as the Cheese Capital of Canada.

In 1894, there were 68 cheese factories in Hastings County, 8 of them in Madoc township. Cheese exports peaked in 1904, and the number of little factories declined from then on due to the development of creameries and increasing fluid milk marketing.

Like their neighbours, the O'Hara family shipped milk to the Spring Hill Cheese Factory located at the northeast corner of Mill Rd. and O'Hara Rd.



The Spring Hill Cheese Factory circa. 1900

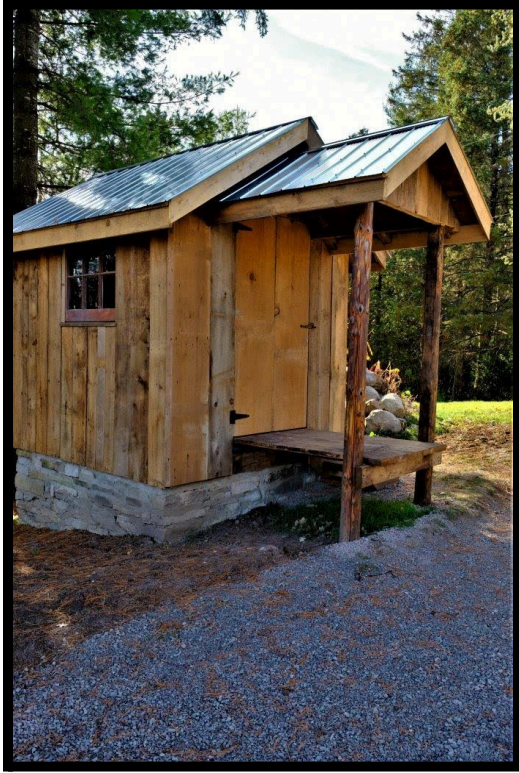
O'Hara Milk Stand



Colleen Mains and Minnie (Lafferty) O'Hara

THE NEW MILK STAND

The recently-constructed milk stand at the O'Hara Mill Homestead is a tribute to the O'Hara's role in local cheddar cheese production.



The milk stand foundation is built with limestone salvaged from the old barn on the farm property at the south-east corner of Mill Rd. and O'Hara Rd. An 1878 map shows a George Hagarty farming there at that time. Hagarty would have shipped milk from that barn to the neighbouring Spring Hill factory.

The milk stand door was made from one white pine board (cut in half) 14 feet long and 22 inches wide. It was sawn at the O'Hara sawmill, dismantled from the

granary of a nearby barn built in 1879. Must have been some magnificent virgin timber when the O'Haras settled in the Madoc area in 1823.

The O'Hara milk stand siding consists of granary boards salvaged from several old barn granaries, some of them sawn at the O'Hara sawmill. And worn smooth from more than a century of grain rubbing against them.

Each of the 40-gallon milk cans has the past owners' names stamped on their lids. They were donated from a farm once owned by James Fox, then later owned by Ogle Devolin. Both of these farmers would have shipped milk to the Spring Hill factory.

The milk stand floor consists of wide two-inch planks salvaged from the threshing floor of a local barn built in the late 1800s.

The Windlass



The hand-cranked windlass, used for getting the full cans of milk in and out of the deep cold water trough, came from the still-standing milk stand on a farm at the upper end of O'Hara Rd.

All in all, this little building at the O'Hara homestead is alive with memories of a once-vibrant era of cheese making in the O'Hara settlement.

The Milk Cans

When milk cans were picked up and taken to the cheese factory, the cans needed to be returned to the respective owners. This was made possible by a nameplate that was attached to the can.



The MacIntosh milk stand on O'Hara Rd.



Written by Dave Little, September 2020
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