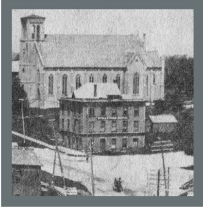


December is usually a month of religious celebrations and of family gatherings. This month we are sharing the stories of some of the families who are celebrated in more than one of our historical plaques. Thanks to the research by Mark Yakabuski, Allan Tye, Margaret Murray, and Carole Huband. Photos by Wayne Whitehorn and members of the research committee. Historical photos courtesy of the Stratford-Perth Archives.

The Sharman Family

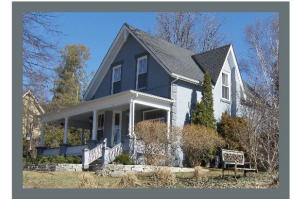
John Sharman, a blacksmith from Bedfordshire, England, arrived in the village of Stratford with his wife, Lydia Brown, in July 1834. The Canada Company surveyors had just completed the town plan and John arrived in time to purchase the first lot the Company sold. It was in a clearing on the riverbank opposite St Joseph's Church. John built a dwelling and the first blacksmith shop there. Sadly, Lydia died shortly after arriving and was buried in an unmarked grave in a small cemetery plot adjoining St James Anglican Church.

In 1839 John married Isabella Gibb whose family immigrated in 1834 to Downie Township. According to the 1861 census their five sons were still living at home in the house John had built which became the original wing of 51 Avon Street. In 1873 John and Isabella moved to a new house, 110 Douglas Street.



The Farmer's Inn

The Sharman blacksmith business led to the establishment of the foundry on Birmingham Street. John was soon able to purchase additional land including properties in adjoining Downie Township and was appointed a Crown Lands Agent for the northern townships of Perth County. The second Stratford inn, The Farmers' Inn, was built by the Sharmans at the corner of Huron and Mornington Streets.



**John Sharman-
Blacksmith/Land Agent/ Business man
110 Douglas Street, Built 1873**

James Sharman, the third son, and only family member to remain in Stratford, was a machinist at the foundry. He married Mary Dean in 1868 and a year later the couple moved into the new house at 234 St. Patrick Street. James and his family later moved to Birmingham Street near Daly Terrace. When his father died in 1883, his mother moved in with them.

For five years, James managed the foundry business. He was very civic minded and was a member of City Council for a number of years and was also a trustee on the school board. In 1885, an accident occurred at the foundry in which James lost part of his right arm causing him to retire as manager.

James also retired from City Council and was soon appointed to take over the position of City Assessor. He remained in this post until he retired in 1912. James Sharman died in 1925 and is buried in Avondale Cemetery beside other family members.



**James Sharman-
Machinist/Manager-Stratford Foundry
234 St Patrick Street, Built 1869**

The Beadle Family



**John Charles Beadle-Farmer
269 Nelson Street, Built 1875**

In 1844 John Charles along with his parents, John Beadle and Selina Latter, and three of his siblings, emigrated from Kent, England. The family farmed in Ellice Township, where John was also a brewer. In about 1853 John Charles married Sarah (Harriet) Carey, also an immigrant from Kent.

John Charles farmed in Ellice Township soon after immigrating in 1844, and from 1863 to 1869, he had a farm adjacent to his brother, Thomas Edwin. John Charles retired from farming in about 1891, moving to Stratford. He and Sarah first lived on Front Street and later on Mornington Street. John Charles and Sarah had six children.

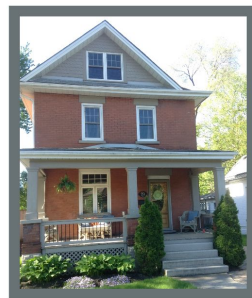
The house at 269 Nelson Street was built after April in 1875. It appears that John Charles built the house as an income property, and as he eventually retired to Stratford, perhaps he intended to live in this house. He rented it to two tenants from 1875 to 1878 or 1879, when the house was sold.

The Beadle Family

Thomas Edwin Beadle was the brother of John Charles Beadle. They had adjacent farms in Ellice Township. Thomas Edwin married Ellen Jane Roberts in 1848. It appears that Thomas Edwin retired from farming by the early 1860s, and subsequently had a brickyard in Ellice. Thomas moved to Stratford after his wife's death in 1872. In 1873 he married Sarah Middleditch. They had two children: William Henry and Albert Edward.

After moving to Stratford, Thomas Edwin was listed as a laborer and later as a teamster. From 1891 until 1898/early 1899, during which period the house at 253 Ontario Street was constructed, he was listed as a fish dealer. He finally retired fully by September 1899 at age 74.

After Thomas Edwin's death in 1902, Sarah continued living at 253 Ontario Street, and then lived with her son William and family. Albert became the foreman at a woollen mill, and he and his family lived at 253 Ontario Street for many years.



**Thomas E. Beadle-Retired Brickyard
Owner & Fish Dealer
253 Ontario Street, Built 1895**



**William Henry Beadle-
Machinist, McLagan Furniture
Company
257 Ontario Street, Built 1904**

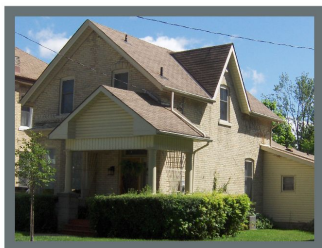
William Henry Beadle, son of Thomas Edwin Beadle and Sarah Middleditch, was born in 1875 most likely in the home of his parents, right next door at 253 Ontario Street. After their father died in 1902 both William and his brother continued to live in the house at 253 Ontario Street with their mother. William became a wood machinist with the McLagan Furniture Company. In 1902 William married Hannah Marie Bradfield of Stratford. In 1904 Albert and William had the lot severed and William built the house at 257 Ontario Street.

By 1909 William was working as a stock clerk at McLagan's. In 1911 he, Marie, their son, and William's mother Sarah moved into the Stratford Collegiate Institute on St. Andrew St. where William was employed as the caretaker. In 1926 he purchased a house at 45 Douglas Street and continued to work at the Collegiate until shortly before his death in 1949.

The Johnson Family

Thomas Benjamin Johnson was the son of George Johnson and Elizabeth Hill who had emigrated from England in the late 1830s or early 1840s. They farmed at first in York Township, and by the 1860s they were in Downie Township. By the late 1870s George had retired from farming and moved with the family to Stratford, where they lived on Albert Street. By 1881 Thomas Benjamin had become a butcher and was living with his mother and five of his siblings at the Albert Street house.

In 1889 Thomas Benjamin married Mary Ann (Minnie) McCurdy in Toronto. They had two children: Jennie and Henry.

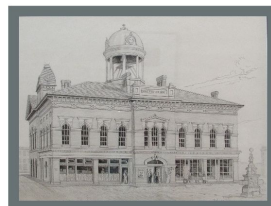


**Thomas B. Johnson-
Butcher/Builder
185 Albert Street, Built 1888**

Beginning in the mid-1880s, the butcher shop of Thomas Benjamin and his brother George Jr. was located in two rented stalls on the ground floor of the original market and town hall building constructed on Market Square in 1857. Like many merchants in Stratford, Thomas Benjamin dabbled in real estate, in 1888 constructing 185 Albert Street, which he used as an income property.

On November 24, 1897 fire broke out in the town hall and market building, which destroyed everything including the businesses on the ground floor. While they and their fellow tradesmen lost everything, the Johnsons (Thomas Benjamin, George Jr., and Alfred) were able to recover and opened a meat market at 88 Downie Street.

**The first Town/City Hall
1857-1897**



George L. Johnson was the son of George Johnson and Elizabeth Hill, and was the brother of Thomas Benjamin Johnson. In February 1883 George Johnson and Mary Ellen Edith Dunsmore, who grew up in the hamlet of Harmony, in the Gore of Downie just outside Stratford, were married, and took up residence on Erie Street. Their family included a son George and daughters Zeta May and Ellen Edith.

The Johnson Family



George Jr. operated a butcher shop with his brothers Thomas Benjamin and Alfred, first in the original market and town hall building, and after the fire at 88 Downie Street.

Mary Ellen died in 1915 at age 49. In 1918 George became the owner of the new house at 81 Nile Street, but his stay there was brief. He was in failing health and moved to the Church Street residence of his daughter Zeta Hayhow, where he lived until his death on August 26, 1922. He is buried with Mary Ellen in Avondale Cemetery.

**George Johnson-Butcher
81 Nile Street, Built 1918**

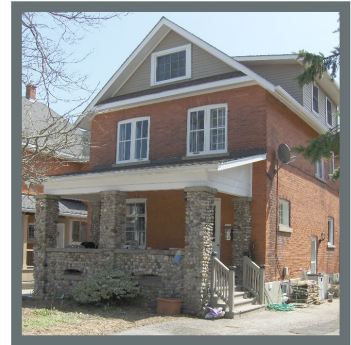
During his teen years and into his early twenties, Henry Johnson both apprenticed and worked with his father, Thomas Benjamin, as a butcher. However, in 1922 Henry listed his occupation as drover on his marriage certificate, when he married Barbara Adella Gibson, the daughter of a merchant in Ashfield, Huron County.



Governor's Residence at the jail.

Shortly after their marriage the couple moved into their new house at 161 Elizabeth Street, where they lived for a couple of years. They subsequently lived in a variety of locations in Stratford. Following the marriage, Henry returned to the family trade and

had a shop "Henry Johnson's Meats and Groceries" at various locations on Ontario Street. Henry kept the shop until the late thirties when he became a salesman, then an employee of the OPP, and eventually joining the army. In 1944 Henry was appointed Governor of the Stratford-Perth County Jail. He and Barbara, who acted as Matron, lived in the Governor's residence at the jail. Henry presided over the last hanging at the jail in 1954.



**Henry Johnson-Butcher
161 Elizabeth Street, Built 1923**

The Writt Family

In the 1890s, Agnes and Anastasia Writt left their home in Ellice Township to pursue their future in Stratford. Agnes had completed her education at the Stratford Collegiate Institute and Business College and was employed as a bookkeeper for Walsh Brothers, grocers and liquor merchants. Anastasia found a position as a bookkeeper for J. D. McCrimmon, a local business. Later she worked in the composing room at the Beacon. By 1900, their mother, Catherine, had also moved to Stratford with their brother, Thomas, who worked as a carpenter.

In 1906 Agnes spent \$450.00 to purchase Lot # 82 on the north side of Huron Street. She proceeded to have the property divided, and a house, which became 200 Huron Street, was built on the west half.

REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Brown John, 24 Downie
Burritt D B, 15 Market Place
Cotty H J, & Co Ltd, 116 Downie
Dempsey H W, 33 Downie
Graff G I, 25 Market Place (see advt)
Hamilton W R, 235 Huron
Jones A E F, 42 Albert (see advt)
Lawrence Wm, City Hall
Lloyd John W, 48 Ontario
Pitts H, 43 Brunswick
Stevenson A, 49 Downie
Stevenson J & R J, 72 Ontario
Writt A M, 15 Downie

Agnes and Anastasia appear to have been energetic and industrious business women. In 1912 Agnes set up her own real estate business, Writt and Co. Within the year she was also in the insurance business and had an office at 13 Downie Street. Agnes was, at that time, one of Stratford's thirteen real estate agents, and not surprisingly, the only woman in that business.

**Agnes Writt-Insurance Broker
200 Huron Street, Built 1906**



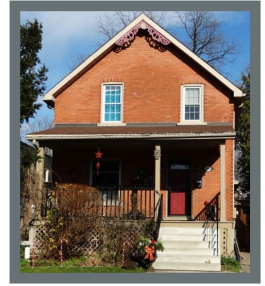
The Writt Family



Agnes & Anastasia Writt
196 Huron Street, Built 1922

In 1911, Thomas married Ellen Brown. They became the parents of three children; Marie Brigid, Joseph, and Thomas Jr. Thomas built the house at 126 Huron Street in 1914. He is listed as both the builder and the first occupant of the house. He and Ellen lived at this address until 1927. Thomas remained a carpenter for some time but became a driver and later a cream buyer for Silverwoods Dairy. When Ellen died on January 28, 1941, Thomas moved in with his two sisters.

Agnes and Anastasia tragically perished together in January 1947 in a house fire at 196 Huron Street. Agnes apparently fell asleep while smoking in bed and was smothered by the smoke from the fire that started from her cigarette. Anastasia suffered severe burns while trying to rescue her sister. Thomas tried to save his sisters but the smoke and fire were overwhelming. Stratford firemen rushed Anastasia to hospital but she died within a few hours. The efforts of the firemen in bringing the fire under control contained the fire to the bedroom area and the remainder of the house was untouched.



Thomas Writt-Carpenter
126 Huron Street, Built 1914

President's Message

What a year it has been. In spite of the pandemic, our branch has been able to publish several issues of our newsletter, update our website, and continue with plaque research - although at a much slower pace.

This issue of our newsletter is all about families - a theme that is usually important at this time of year, but even more so in 2020. The stories in this edition were compiled by several plaque researchers over the years. I hope you enjoy reading about some of Stratford's interesting families, and if you want to learn more about them, please find the full monographs on our website.

All the best. Here's hoping for a better 2021!

Interested in Volunteering?

Do you like to write? We need people to write articles for our newsletters. The word count should be from 250 to 400 words. The topic? Something concerning the buildings in Stratford and Perth County and the stories that they tell. Contact Carole Huband hubandca@rogers.com

Interested in information about researching or having a plaque made? Get in touch with our plaque coordinator Mark Yakabuski yakster@rogers.com

Interested in advocacy for Heritage Conservation Districts? There is a group looking into this for Hamlet Ward. Get in touch with Mary Walton mmwalton1997@gmail.com or Richard Wood rwoodn618@rogers.com