

Stores

There have been three stores in Utopia throughout the years. The first store was owned by Mr. John Cross in 1890 and situated in the centre of the village. Mr. Manuel Bell took over this store in 1910 and continued its operation until his death in 1927.

In the early 1930's, a store was set up in the metal-sheathed building that stands just south of the mill. It sold a variety of general goods, especially canned foodstuffs, in the front room, and farming hardware in the back room. During World War Two, the store began selling gasoline from a small pump located just by its southeast corner. It was a popular location as farmers would commune at the mill or store in the evening to socialize. The store was open until 10:00 p.m. most nights, operated by Harold Bell with the mill in the daytime, and by Myrtle Bell in the evenings. It was one of the few places where gasoline could be bought in the evenings at that time. With its tremendous variety of services, the Bell Mill and store were at the centre of the business and social community.

In the later 1950's a new store and service station was located on the north side of Highway 90, about 1.4 kilometres before the 6th Concession of Essa Township. This store was first built and operated by Phil Amero who sold it later to Wm. Van Leeuwen. Mr. Van Leeuwen operated it for a time and sold it to the present owner, Ralph D'Alonzo.