

## Beef Ring

It was in 1924 that some of the people in the Utopia area organized a beef ring, whose membership consisted of 20 local farmers, plus a number of ½ share members.

At the organizational meeting for the beef ring, Mr. Thomas Smith offered a site and lumber to build the slaughterhouse. This offer was accepted and a bee was organized to put up the building.

The first president was Mr. William Higginson. Mr. Dave Miller was the secretary from 1924-35 when Mr. Eugene Smith was appointed and continued until the closing of the ring in 1951. The ring was used for twenty weeks during the summer when the weather was too hot to allow keeping unrefrigerated meat for very long. At an annual meeting, twenty farmers were selected for the beef ring; one member would sacrifice one cattle beast one week, and another the following week. The beef would be divided up into twenty shares of twenty pounds each, and at the end of the summer, the number of pounds each member put in was tallied up. If a farmer contributed a four hundred pound cattle beast, and only used three hundred pounds of meat, he was reimbursed for the one hundred pounds that he did not use. Each farmer was allowed to use only what he gave. The beef ring was a well organized group. They had their own beef inspectors and butcher, Mr. Billy Brooks. At a time when there was no refrigeration, the beef ring satisfied the need for fresh meat during the summer months. The ring was terminated, however, in 1951, after the spread of hydro to the rural areas allowed individuals to more conveniently refrigerate their meat.

In 1972, the building was donated to the Simcoe County Museum at Midhurst, where it stands among other pioneer buildings of a bygone age.