

Elgie Log House
Original Building
West Nissouri Township, circa 1865

Contributed by Kelly Lewis

The Elgie Log House was built about 1865 on Lot 24, Concession 7, West Nissouri Township. While the builder of the house has never been identified, it is known that the Log House was the boyhood home of Michael Elgie. Elgie's father, James, moved to West Nissouri Township around 1877 where he purchased the log home and farm. The log house was originally built as a one and a half storey structure typical of the period, but was reconstructed as a single storey dwelling when it was moved to the Village.

The Elgie Log House is not a shanty or cabin but a genuine log house made with hewn logs and glass windows. In such houses, the windows and doors were usually cut after the walls were in place. The house generally had wooden boards for floors and a brick or stone fireplace for heat and cooking. It also usually had a partial second floor which was reached by a ladder or sometimes stairs, for sleeping and storage. ¹

These additions were improvements over the immigrant's initial dwelling, suggesting that the settlers had been on the land for some time, but not long enough to have built a second home. They could now afford some comforts such as glass windows and manufactured furniture. ² Immigrants did not usually bring large pieces of furniture or implements with them because they were cumbersome and costly to transport. As such, household furnishings had to be purchased, or, hand made.

The acquisition of this particular log building by Fanshawe Pioneer Village is a tale on its own. In 1957, Horace Weekes sold his log house to the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. Not realizing that there were two similar log houses in close proximity, UTRCA staff ended up accidentally dismantling the building that belonged to

Michael Elgie.³ Elgie eventually agreed to sell the house to UTRCA for five hundred dollars and Fanshawe Pioneer Village became home to two original pioneer dwellings.

The case of mistaken identity unfortunately continued after the Elgie home was moved to the Village, and for many years the house was misidentified as the Weekes Log House.⁴ In 2004, this mistake was corrected by Fanshawe Pioneer Village staff researchers who confirmed the true identity of the building by corresponding with relatives of Michael Elgie. Today, the Elgie Log House is now accurately represented in the Village and is a central building for interpreting the story of early settlement in Middlesex County.

¹ Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Log Structures #2 Building Box). Internal Document *The Log House and Stable*, author and date unknown.

² Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Log Structures #2 Building Box). Internal Document *Proposal for the Furnishing and Interpretation of the Log House*, author and date unknown.

³ Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Log Structures #2 Building Box). *Jenna Whalen File*, 2004.

⁴ Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Log Structures #2 Building Box). *Correspondence with Madge Elgie*.