

**Inducted: 2008**



A renowned Ilderton-area stockman, who bred, imported and exported purebred cattle and sheep. During the early 1900's, his Fairfield Stock Farm prefix denoted prize-winning quality in the show-rings of North America. During his life-time he was a director, exhibitor and judge at the Ilderton Fair, Western Fair, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, and the Chicago International Stock show. For a period of over 50 years, Joe masterminded the importing, breeding, sales and exporting of large numbers of sheep and livestock to and from the Ilderton area. One of the most spectacular events was in 1901 when he shipped a trainload of 600 ewes from Ilderton to Idaho. In 1921, he exported the first shipment of Canadian Holstein cattle to Japan.

**Joseph H. Patrick  
1863-1939**

Joseph H Patrick was one of the first generations of Patrick's to be born in London Township. In 1856, his father Thomas III purchased the S½ Lot 22 Con 11, directly south of his parent's property and he married Ellen Jane Hughes. They had 10 children born over a period of 20 years with two dying in infancy. The others were Thomas IV, Rachel, Mary Anne, Joseph, Rebecca, Isabella, Nancy and Eugene. The eldest, Thomas IV, was educated locally. He became a teacher and taught at the school in Birr for several years before moving west in 1881 where he became a successful Manitoba coal and lumber merchant. The girls over a period of years all married farmers within the local area.

By the late 1860's much of the agricultural land of western Ontario had been cleared and was being farmed by the second or even third generation of settlers. Once having been cleared, the quality of the land became apparent. This meant abundant crops for both human consumption and for livestock usage. The combination of good land and an aggressive farming community spawned many prospering rural communities. It was a time for upgrading the seed stock of the original cattle that had accompanied the pioneers to this land. With the coming of local rail service in the mid 1870's, the importation of new bloodlines of horses, cattle and sheep from the British Isles became a viable reality for many farmers. The first serious importations were of sheep (Lincoln, Leicester, Cotswold and Romney). Unlike other stock, they provided both food and clothing. Wool could be sold for cash, bartered at the mills for blankets, or spun and woven in the home for articles of clothing. Most farms had a flock of 25-30 ewes. The established Ontario farmers, once they had upgraded their stock, were then able to capitalize on the opening up of the Canadian and American west to settlers by having a ready supply of hardy breeding stock when needed. Ontario farmers lambled indoors from mid-December through April, resulting in lambs that were of greater stature and maturity in the fall than lambs

born outside later in the year on western ranches. By purchasing these well-grown lambs (usually ram lambs), western sheep farmers were able to achieve an extra year's service from the ram. Railways, first used to import new breeding stock to this area as they moved westward, allowed local farmers the opportunity of exporting their surplus breeding stock to that large opening market.

The Patrick family were good stockmen and as such by the early 1880's were becoming known for their quality breeding stock. Upon his father's death in 1888 the sole responsibility of the farm became his. As Joe's knowledge of animal and field husbandry increased he capitalized on this by producing some of the area's top crops and livestock. He raised Clydesdale horses, Lincoln and Cotswold sheep. These were exhibited, for all to see the quality of his Fairfield Farm stock, at the local fairs and exhibitions.

Joe, the second oldest boy in the family, received his formal education at S.S. #8. Although he did not seek other formal education, Joe became, over-time, a well-travelled, well read, and self- educated man. In 1895 Joe married Elisabeth O'Neil. By this time he was recognized as an established importer, breeder and exporter of quality stock to and from the Ilderton -area.

Shortly before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Eugene, who was 14 years younger than Joe returned home to farm. The youngest of the family, he also attended SS#8 and then High School in Lucan. After spending two years at Methodist Theological College in Albion Michigan, he decided that being a minister was not to his liking. He bought a farm, married a local girl and became partners with his brother Joe in the import/export business.

The business flourished. They imported purebred livestock from the British Isles for breeding on the Ilderton-area farms or for sale to the United States. While the two Patrick brothers were involved in the buying, selling and breeding of cattle and horses, they mainly concentrated on the purebred sheep business. Eugene and his wife eventually moved to the Salt Lake City area of Utah and handled the western end of the business.

In the winter of 1900-1901, the Patrick brothers put together a train load of 600 Lincoln ewes which were shipped from Ilderton to Idaho. While much of this shipment would have been Patrick-bred, the rest was likely bought locally. The ready sale of good quality surplus stock provided many area farmers with a welcome source of cash income. From the rail yards at Ilderton, shipments of breeding stock left not only for western farms and ranches but also for consignment sales held annually in Salt Lake City Utah, Sacramento California and Denver Colorado.

When sheep breeders started to look for a meatier animal, Joe Patrick was one of the first to import the Suffolk breed to Canada. Along with his brother Eugene, he brought this breed into the American west where it gradually surpassed the wool breeds in numbers, and it became the most popular breed in Canada and the United States. In the early 1920's Joe made two shipments of sheep and one of Holstein cattle to Japan. This was the first shipment of Holstein cattle to leave Canada for that country.

As the quality of his stock improved and as a way of advertising his wares, large numbers were exhibited at major shows such as London's Western Fair, the Guelph Winter Fair, the CNE, the Chicago International Stock Show, St. Louis Worlds Fair in 1904, the early Toronto Industrial Fair and later The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Joe Patrick's reputation was such that he was invited to be a director on many of these fairs and judged

most of the major stock shows. His "Fairfield Stock Farm" came to be a showplace for innovation and quality. He had a flock of sheep numbering up to 450, possibly the largest in eastern Canada at a time when the average flock was 25-30. There was a herd of beef cattle and a stable of home-bred prize winning horses. In 1932 he won the Governor General's Cup for the best three year-old hunter type horse in Canada. He built a silo for corn silage, grew alfalfa as a hay crop and owned a tractor – all firsts in the area. The farm was illuminated by means of a "Delco generating system" long before Hydro was available.

Joe and his wife Elisabeth had three children. Thomas who farmed with his father, became an internationally known livestock exhibitor, breeder, importer and exporter in his own right. He also served as a provincial member of parliament for four terms. Daughters Almira, married William S. O'Neil and Ida married Roy Moore, a rancher and commission buyer in the western United States.

Joe Patrick died suddenly October 24, 1939 while working around the farm. He had a history of heart problem and the stress of running a farm at 76 caught up with him.

For a period of almost 75 years (from the 1880's to the mid1950's) the "Fair Field Stock Farm" of Ilderton was a major source of quality livestock. The vision, determination and expertise demonstrated by Joe Patrick throughout most of that time, led to cattle and sheep from Ontario being exported to four provinces, sixteen states, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Jamaica, Venezuela and Columbia.

We recognize here today that expertise displayed by Joseph H. Patrick by inducting him into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame.