

■ **HISTORY:** Descendants have made lasting impact

# Lambton took in 'Home Children'

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The Observer

While child poverty continues to be a heart-wrenching problem, Great Britain solved it a hundred years by sending children as young as two to Canada.

The 100,000 children who arrived in rural communities, including Lambton County, between 1869 and 1948 are known as the British Home Children.

They were orphans or came from families that couldn't support them.

A Facebook site, Descendants of British Home Children — Lambton County Branch, has been set up to help descendants conduct research and learn more about an interesting chapter of Canadian heritage.

Barbara Luckham, co-ordinator of Lambton's branch

of the Ontario Genealogical Society, has been gathering information about Lambton home children for two years.

They were told they would love Canada, a land of beautiful mountains, but the reality included a lot of "horror stories" in which children were treated as slave labour on farms, housed in barns and fed at the back door, she said.

People who took in home children were supposed to contribute money to the orphanage, which could be returned to the child at age 16.

She has a personal connection. Her husband's grandfather, William Luckham, cared for a home child in the early 1900s.

"It sparked my interest," she said.

A search of the family records produced a photograph of a well-clothed boy about the same age as her hus-

band's father.

The two must have been friends, Luckham said.

Despite the horror stories, some children encountered caring families, like the Luckhams, that prepared them well for a new life in Canada.

"I would like to think every child in Lambton was treated well," said Luckham.

Three brothers came to Lambton in 1905 from the streets of London, where they'd been begging for pennies. Their father had tried to support the family by selling firewood, until he became ill.

In 1903 the brothers entered a Barnardo Home, part of the British orphanage system. It had established connections with similar Canadian institutions, and those connections brought them to the new country.

From Lambton farms they launched successful lives that took them to western Canada,

then back to England as soldiers in the First World War.

They built strong families and healthy homes, Luckham said.

Two years of detective work in the local 1911 census and Veterans Affairs archives enabled Luckham to compile information about 59 home children that came to Lambton.

The information is contained in two volumes at the Lambton Room of the county library headquarters in Wyoming. She's eager to add to a third volume, that's currently being compiled.

People with information can contact her by e-mail at [bluckham@ciaccess.com](mailto:bluckham@ciaccess.com).

Anyone interested or with possible connections to British Home Children can examine the library volumes.

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