

Eatery reflects history

ST. JACOB'S, Ont. (CP) — Coal-oil lamps centre the tables, the aroma of fresh baked bread, pies and rolls is wafted into the dining rooms of the new Stone Crock restaurant here, the only known Mennonite-operated dining place in Ontario.

Outside, horses are hitched to a hay wagon to take guests for a ride through the peaceful countryside of Old Order Mennonite country.

Milo Shantz, owner of the Stone Crock and his manager, Lou Martin, plan to turn it into a surrey with a fringe on top before the summer is over. Long seats have been installed. Guests can sit back and enjoy fieldstone houses and old-fashioned snaked fences while the horses trot down country roads.

Since it opened last fall the Stone Crock restaurant has caught on. Guests jam the Eby Room, the Martin Room and the Century room for the Mennonite fare. Sometimes as many as 900 a day are accommodated.

Mennonite women in the kitchen turn out shoo-fly pies, their specialty, by the dozens and sizzle fat lengths of farmer's sausage in great pans. Sauerkraut, a Waterloo County specialty, is always ready as are large bowls of bean salad, another Mennonite favorite.

The restaurant has become such a favorite that bus tours have made it one of their stops. Passengers rush in and then sit back and drool as such little extras as home-made apple butter is set before them and hot rolls straight from the oven appear.

"We have tried to recapture the look of a Mennonite farm kitchen and serve the meals in the same manner," said Mr. Martin.

The restaurant has succeeded. It is as charming as any Mennonite kitchen. Geraniums bloom at the windows. Twenty-four antique side-boards and dry sinks are scattered about in the various dining rooms. There is even a woodburning stove in one.

In the evenings, the coal oil lamps send flickering light over the red checkered table cloths.

Adding to the country style are the family dinners served each Saturday and Sunday. Platters are replenished with meat to be passed around the table for a second helping.

The horse-drawn hay-wagon ride is an inspiration which patrons find irresistible.

For those who just want to stroll there is an authentic blacksmith shop a short distance away, a general store and above all the peaceful atmosphere of a hamlet in Old Order Mennonite land. Horse-drawn buggies conveying bonneted women and their husbands clipclop down streets and Mennonite children shyly make their way to the store.

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