

## A glimpse of history

When Lucy Shephard (nee Fairbank) lived in the old Steel House at Steel's Corners (Highway 11 and Concession 14), she and her siblings discovered a dusty, well-bound volume in the attic of the home.

They played with the book, wrote in a few L.O.U.s, and admired the elegant handwriting. It wasn't until years later, long after the Steel House had been torn down for the widening of Highway 11, that Shephard realised she had something out of the ordinary.

The book turned out to be the Day book of blacksmith John Steel. Dating from 1855 to 1869, it itemises the daily and monthly ac-

counts of residents like Robert Knowlton, Joseph Fenner, James and Robert Bell.

Prices ranged from 10 cents to mend a pitchfork and 25 cents to replace a horseshoe, to \$1.75 for repairs to a "drizzling morden" (drizzling machine). The accounts also contain a price list for construction materials for a new home in the late 1860's - including \$123.41 for lumber, \$19.30 for hardware, and \$11.51 for the glass and "putty".

The prices seem remarkably low by today's standards, and it is a surprise to note that over the 14 years spanned by the accounts, the blacksmith's prices did not go up.