



**Inducted: 2002**

I. B. Whale, the first Agricultural Representative in Middlesex County, gave tirelessly of himself for the betterment of his community and the agricultural industry. He introduced extension education to the rural population of Middlesex in the form of “short courses” from which the origins of the Middlesex County Junior Farmers began.

As associate editor of the Farmers Advocate, he worked closely with and at Weldwood Farms to both expound and demonstrate practical agricultural techniques. His interest in agricultural improvement continued with other agricultural leaders to include the development of the Middlesex Seed Fair, which later became the Western Fair Farm Show. His association with Western Fair began 1932 and he served as President from 1953 –1956.

**I. B. WHALE**  
**1885 - 1961**

In 1885, Irving Brock Whale was the fourth generation to be born on the family farm at Goldstone, near Cookstown, Ontario. He was a willing and energetic worker with a fascination for living-growing things. He graduated in 1911 from the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph and obtained his first job with the Ontario Government as the first Agricultural Representative for Dufferin County. He must have been a very successful in that posting, as the next year (1912) he was sent to open the first Middlesex office of the Department of Agriculture in London.

In his role as the first Middlesex Agricultural Representative, Mr. Whale was instrumental in designing and operating a varied series of short courses for farmers, one of which was on orchard management. These courses were offered at several locations throughout the county. Young farmers attending his 1914 series of courses in the Strathroy area realized that they also provided a much-needed social venue for young rural people. I. B. helped the young people organize social events around the educational courses. This was the beginning of the Junior Farmers Organization, which became one of the province’s leading venues by which home economic and agricultural extension could be disseminated to rural Ontario.

I. B. Whale served as agricultural representative until December of 1915 when he resigned to accept a position as associate editor of the London based Farmers Advocate. In many respects his job as “ag rep” was similar to that of associate editor as both involved ongoing contact with farm people and the dissemination of

agricultural information. However, in his role as an editorial writer and reporter for the Farmers Advocate, which was widely read by farmers in the Maritime Provinces, Ontario, and Manitoba, I. B. Whale was able to pass on ideas and information to a much broader audience.

One unique aspect of the Farmers Advocate was that it was integrated by its owners the Weld family with their farm on #2 Highway, now Wharnccliffe Road, between London and Lambeth. This farm was known as Weldwood Farm and served as a reference point for agricultural practices. The farm had an excellent herd of dual purpose (milking) Shorthorns, and Yorkshire pigs, as well as chickens and guinea fowl. The crops were hay, pasture, small grains, and an apple orchard. As something of a model farm, it provided excellent opportunities for trying out new varieties of crops and new production techniques, all of which were fully reported by I. B. Whale in his column "Weldwood Jottings".

When the great depression of the 1930's came along, the Weld family had to make adjustments like most other Ontario businesses. It is reported that they concluded that they could no longer afford to keep both Watson Porter and I. B. Whale exclusively on the editorial staff so either I. B. Whale would have to take a cut in pay, resign, or take on the added responsibility of managing Weldwood Farm. He chose the latter and was a resounding success in making the farm the centre of agricultural attention among Ontario farmers. It served as a practical research station where new crops and livestock production techniques were demonstrated and the findings were widely reported in the Farmers Advocate and to a myriad of groups who visited the farm.

While working for the Farmers Advocate from 1915 to 1955, I. B. attended and reported on all major agricultural events and meetings etc. in Ontario and the surrounding provinces and states. His writings influenced much more than Middlesex County and the province of Ontario. They covered every subject pertinent to agriculture as well as provincial and federal legislation as it pertained to rural Canada. His writings often addressed ecological change and his concerns for the balance of nature. I. B. Whale lived and worked at Weldwood farm while maintaining his associated editorship of the "Advocate" until he was seventy years of age.

Through the farm he was actively involved in 4-H and Junior Farmers' activities with demonstrations and judging competitions, and as needed, he offered advice to young people on agricultural issues. He was closely involved with the Middlesex Soil and Crop Improvement Association and the initiation of the Middlesex Seed Fair in 1938, which over time evolved into the Western Fair Farm Show. Mr. Whale was a tireless worker for the Western Fair Association, starting in 1932 and he was elected as a director in 1938. With the onset of World War II, the Western Fair facilities were transformed into an army manning and training depot until 1947. The Fair Association, because of dedicated workers like I.B. Whale, stayed together holding annual meetings and looked ahead to better days. He helped reorganize the fair and staff to reopen post-war in 1948 and to guide the association's struggle through the difficult rebuilding years that followed the war. I.B. Whale was president from 1953 to 1955 and remained an active member until his death in 1961.

I .B. Whale was married to Edna Morris and they had three children: Mary Whale, who worked in women's missions for the Presbyterian Church; Ruth Knowlton, who lives in Leamington; and Brock, who lives in Waldheim, Saskatchewan and has retired from a career in the extension division of the University of Saskatchewan.

B. Whale was possibly the most widely known and respected agricultural communicator in Ontario in his time and his contributions to agriculture reach well beyond Middlesex County. It is for these achievements that we induct I. B. WHALE into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame.