Fire destroys flour grinding mill

story continued from page 4

On June 25, 1967, the official opening ceremonies took place.

In May, the pond had been refilled, and boasted a unique curving bridge over a waterfall spillway. It was stocked with 2,500 speckled trout.

Three plaques were erected to commemorate the occasion.

One of them tells of the pond's history: This Milton Centennial Pond was developed by Jasper Martin in 1820-1822. Labourers dug it deep enough to float barges, and the earth was then drawn on barges by oxen from the north side to the south bank.

The pond, which is on the Sixteen Mile Creek, supplied waterpower continuously for operating the grist mill from 1822 to 1860, under the ownership of the Martin family.

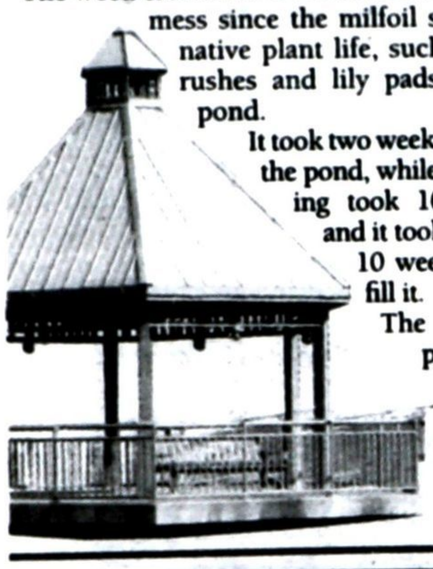
A choir from Martin Street senior public school sang and the 1st Milton Rover Scouts staged a torchlight canoe-past on the pond. Acton Citizens Band presented a brief concert. Fireworks closed out the festivities.

Rejuvenation project

The project to rejuvenate the weed-choked Mill Pond took place in 2000.

It included dredging the entire pond of about 30,000 cubic metres of sediment to eradicate the roots of the invasive weed European milfoil.

The weed created an esthetic and ecological mess since the milfoil strangled native plant life, such as bulrushes and lily pads, in the pond.



It took two weeks to drain the pond, while excavating took 10 weeks, and it took another 10 weeks to refill it.

The much-photographed gazebo was built in 2001.

FIRE GUTS CENTURY-OLD MILL, LOSS $100,000

The Canadian Champion

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48 Firemen Battle Blaze Only Mill Walls Remain

The fire

Fire destroyed the century-old Robin Hood Flour Mills grinding mill on February 12, 1963. Some 45 firefighters from Milton, Acton and Georgetown helped to pour 1.5 million gallons of water onto the raging inferno before it was brought under control. They used water from the pond itself, as well as water from hydrants and some from the creek.

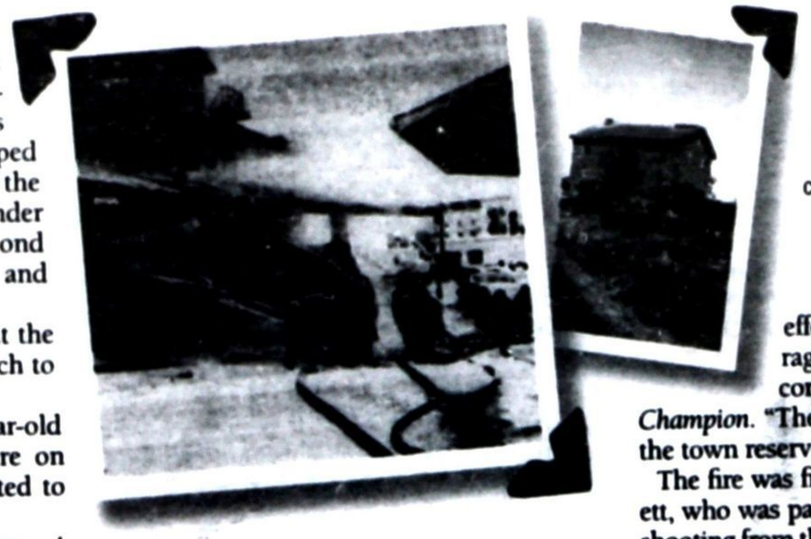
Company officials said at the time that the stonework had been weakened, too much to rebuild.

Fire basically destroyed the 100-year-old flour mill, a four-storey stone structure on Martin Street. The damage was estimated to be more than $100,000.

The cause of the blaze was unknown. A night shift of employees left at 1:30 a.m., and the fire started at 6:22 a.m.

Fire crews had the fire under control by 8:30 a.m. The roof and top two floors of the building caved in as fire weakened the supports and wooden framework.

The building contained the main grinding mill facilities and electrical equipment to operate the two mills, as well as grain, ingredient storage and bagged products storage.



A morning fire destroyed the Robin Hood Flour Mills grinding mill on February 12, 1963. The inferno made the front page of the February 14, 1963 issue of the *Champion* (above). At left, coverage of the fire included a photo of fire crews dousing the blaze. An undated photo of the mill, prior to the fire.
photo courtesy of the Milton Historical Society

Also destroyed was the original water-wheel that — until 1962 — was used to power the flour grinding equipment. Housed at the back of the building, the wheel was operated by water from the millpond and creek, and drove the assembly of belts and pulleys to operate the entire mill.

Dr. C.A. Martin, great-grandson of the mill's founder, sold the mill to Robin Hood in 1961.

At the time, "It took an almost superhuman effort by firefighters to put the raging flames under control," according to a story published in the *Champion*. "The fire lowered the water level in the town reservoir nearly a foot."

The fire was first noticed by Const. Len Pickett, who was patrolling the area. He saw flames shooting from the southeast side of the building.

The historic old building was the third mill to stand on the property. Martin, founder of the town, built the first mill in a frame building beside the Sixteen Mile Creek in 1822, and the town grew around it.

The frame building was later removed and replaced by a large stone mill. This was destroyed by fire in 1855 and the Robin Hood mill destroyed by fire was built in 1857 at a cost of $30,000.

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