



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 51, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada L7G 4T1
www.hhpl.on.ca/sigs/ehs/home.html

Vol. 30 No. 3

September - October 2005

STEWARTTOWN



Esquesing Township Hall – c.1900 EHS p465

The “capital of Esquesing Township” was a proud epithet maintained by the village of Stewarttown for more than 140 years! In fact the village was called Esquesing for many years. Stewarttown also claims to be the oldest village in the township.

Located on a former native trail, Stewarttown had its first settlers in 1819. Situated in a valley on the west branch of the Credit River on the 7th Line, later called Trafalgar Road, on

parts of lots 15 to 17, Concessions 7 and 8, it sits close to the centre of the township.

The earliest settlers were Protestant Irish immigrants. Standish, Beatty, Reed, Randall, Cooke, Graham, Fee, Vance, Morrison, Thompson, and Harrison were families of the area.

The valley was pioneered by the Young, Randall and Harrison families. James Young built a small grist mill. John and Duncan Stewart settled here in 1842 after emigrating from Ireland. The village was named after these entrepreneurs. .

Esquesing’s first post office was opened at the home of Henry Fyfe at Lot 9, Con 7 in 1820. About 1840 it was moved



Esquesing Community Hall – 1948 EHS p469

into Esquesing Village. Beginning about 1846 the name Stewarttown was used but the post office always retained the name of Esquesing. The post office closed after rural delivery was introduced about 1920.



Stewarttown flag stop on Hamilton North-western railway.
EHS p457

The first meeting of Esquesing Township was held at the home of Joseph Standish on New Year's Day, 1821. A Town clerk, assessor, collector, wardens and pathmasters were elected. The annual meetings were held in various homes until 1830, when they moved south on Trafalgar Road to "Long Tom's" Inn on Lot 14. Taverns were the venue of choice thereafter. In 1849, a public meeting was held to consider building a Town Hall as a

permanent office for the Township. A strong delegation from Georgetown wanted the Hall built there. Some private entrepreneurs had already started building the "Town Hall" in Stewarttown but they were left holding the mortgage. Although the farmers resisted the bid for control no new facility was approved. The Township officers decided to rent premises across the road from the Town Clerk, Richard Tracey. This situation persisted until another vote was held in 1925. The Township of Esquesing purchased the "Town Hall" across the street, built 75 years previously. This remained the Township office until an award-winning building was erected in 1962 north of Maple Avenue. Esquesing Township was absorbed into Halton Hills in 1974. The former Township office was used until the opening of the Civic Centre.

The old hall was eventually sold to the Georgetown Little Theatre. The building was destroyed by fire in 1998.

It was not until 1846 that John Stewart received the patent to his property. He sold it the following year to William Clay and James Young, entrepreneurs from Norval and Georgetown. They focussed on flour milling. The mill passed through several owners including Alfred Hood, David McKinnon and Joseph Tweedle.



During the Fenian crisis, miller Bill Stokes shut down the mill to permit the men to mount guard against the Fenian threat from the south.

Tweedle sold the mill to Henry Pratt and David Lawson, two brothers from the Scotch Block. The Lawson family continued as owners and sometimes operators of the mill through four generations, including Walter, his son Walter, Robert and Donald Lawson. They sold it in

1962 to Master Feeds. The last of several fires over the years levelled the mill in 1972 when a store was built on the spot.

While the mill was the most long-lived of Stewarttown's businesses, it was but one of many in the village's heyday. Another industry was leather tanning begun by John Stewart and carried on by David Cross. Cross and another tanner, in 1856, supplied five shoemakers and two saddlers and harness makers. There were three wagon makers, two blacksmiths, two butchers and three grocers. There was a livery stable, a cooper, a sawyer, a broom maker, cabinet maker, pump manufacturer, a tailor and a gentleman's clothing shop. James Lindsay and Alexander McKenzie competed in the hotel trade.

The booming village of Stewarttown quickly lost its importance after 1856 when the railway link through Acton and Georgetown opened. Although trade along Trafalgar Road remained important for many more years, the railways attracted more business and the resulting services every year.

The Hamilton and North-western Railway opened a line in 1873 and Stewarttown had a small whistle stop and freight siding. It closed about 1953.



Although Stewarttown was the capital of Esquesing, students had to walk quite a distance to school in the early days. Stories of meeting bears on the way to Waterloo or Quatre Bras School were told for many years. School was held in the Orange Hall beginning about 1836 and then in a frame building on the corner of Lot 15, Con. 8, where the present school is. They replaced it with a brick school house in 1853. A two-storey brick school house was built for SS #6 in 1873 across

the road on Lot 15, Con. 7. A lack of pupils prompted the Board to remove the upper storey in 1897. A swelling population had trustees move portables onto the site in 1954. Four years later they abandoned the site to move back across the road. The modern school served the entire community for a few more years until becoming a middle school for area students, which it still is today.

Wesleyan Methodists travelled first up to Kennedy's meeting house at 20th Sideroad and after 1833, down to Mount Pleasant on Lot 13, near Long Tom's Tavern. Congregationalists went to Georgetown after 1842 while Presbyterians always travelled down to Boston Church in the Scotch Block until Churches opened at Union, Norval, Limehouse and finally Georgetown.

The village cemetery, begun in 1827 on the south hill overlooking the valley was deeded to the Anglicans who started a church there in 1834. Some members did not like the location so a second church was built on the corner of Lot 15. In 1850 construction began on a new Church on the hill. It was never completed and the wood was used to build a drill shed for the militia behind the Church on Lot 15. The present day school sits on this site. The Mount Pleasant Wesleyan Church was moved to the south-west corner of 15 Sideroad and Trafalgar Road and

sold in 1883 to the Anglicans who opened St. John's Church, the only active Church in the village.

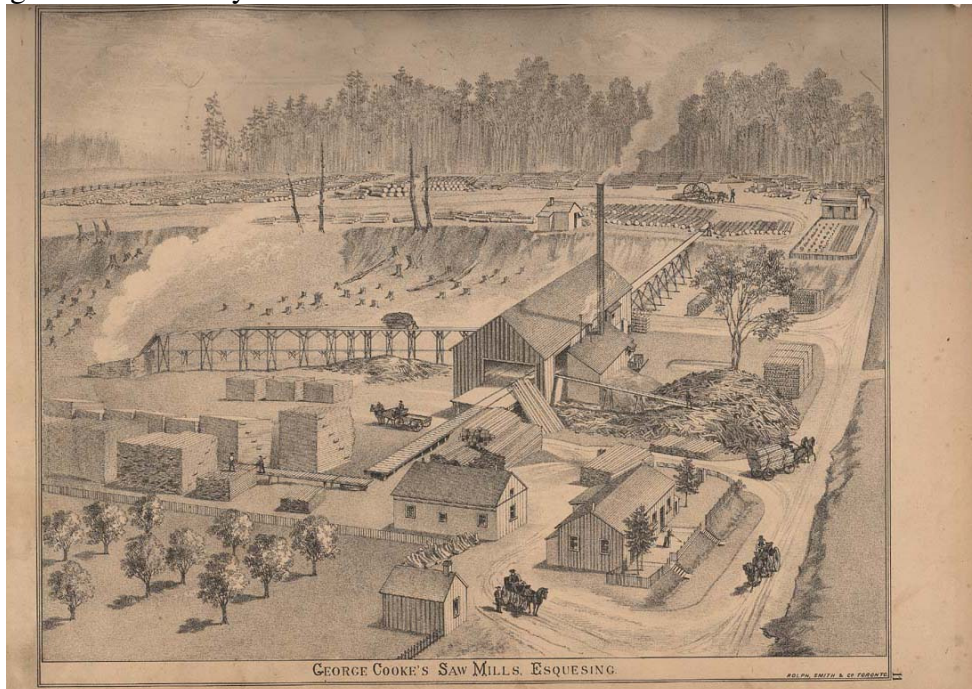


The Wesleyan Church on Lot 20 was moved to the base of the cemetery hill in 1871 where it became Loyal Orange Lodge #68. After the upper storey of the Town Hall was condemned, community dances were held here until 1974, when the building was demolished to extend Trafalgar Road through the valley.

Mackenzie's Inn, located at the base of the north of Bunker's hill, was once the preferred meeting place of the Township Council and was the local tavern for years, serving beer brewed in Hornby by

the Brain Brothers. The militia's annual "training day" was often held in Stewarttown. It involved some marching, some target practice and a long session at the tavern. The old pine hotel burned down in 1909.

The Esquesing Agricultural Society was formed for township agricultural displays and competition in Stewarttown. Ploughing matches were held on the Bessey farm while the Town Hall was used for displaying the best vegetables and crops. The Fall Fair later alternated between Acton and Georgetown. The Society, founded in 1846, continues to this day as the Georgetown Agricultural Society.



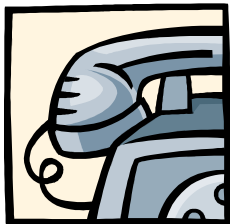
**ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

- Wed. 14 Sept. 2005 **Stewarttown** – Another local history meeting that you can contribute to! Mark Rowe will lead an exploration of the history and people of the Capital of Esquesing! Bring stories, pictures and memorabilia!
ST. JOHN’S ANGLICAN CHURCH, Trafalgar & 15 Sideroad, **Stewarttown**, 7:30 p.m.
- Sat. & Sun. 17 & 18 September 2005 **Acton Fall Fair** – Visit our booth at the Acton Fall Fair this weekend. We will be sharing our display with Heritage Halton Hills and with Heritage Acton. Volunteers are still needed to help with the display.
- Wed. 12 Oct. 2005 **Mystery Photos** – A not-so spooky mystery for October – photos from our own EHS Archives which are unidentified. These are not just from the 1870s. Since we have begun processing our donation from the local newspapers, we have photos from the 1970s that need a name too. Come out and enjoy the local photographs. You just may be in one of them!
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street, **Georgetown**, 7:30 p.m.
- Sat. 22 Oct. **Community Open House** – Georgetown Mall 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Wed. 9 Nov. 2005 **Tweedsmuir Histories** – Jean McLean of the Halton Women’s Institute will explain the work of the Women’s Institutes of collecting local history. The Esquesing Historical Society will bring Tweedsmuir histories from their Archives of Dublin and Acton Women’s Institutes.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street North, **Acton**, 7:30 p.m.

The Society does not hold a regular public meeting in December.

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT NO CHARGE!

Refreshments served from 7:00 p.m.



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Stephen Blake	905 877-8251	President
Karen Hunter	905 838-2109	Treasurer
Dawn Livingstone	905 877-6506	Secretary
Sherry Westfahl	905 873-7145	Past - President
J. Mark Rowe	905 877-9510	Archivist
Carol Wood	905 873-0792	Publications
Marj Allan	905 877-9985	Membership
Cathy Hunt		Social
Jan Raymond		Social

Society Notes

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

The Esqueusing Historical Society has an official web site on the World Wide Web. <www.hhpl.on.ca/sigs/ehs/home.html>

Send your e-mail to mrowe6@cogeco.ca or dlvngstn@sympatico.ca

Canadian Council of Archives web site: <www.CdnCouncilArchives.ca>

EHS NEWSLETTER

John Mark Rowe prepared this newsletter with assistance from Karen Hunter and Dawn Livingstone. Submissions welcome.

MEMBERSHIP

Our 2005 paid memberships stands at 113. Please encourage friends and family to join the EHS and support our efforts to preserve and share our local history. The individual rate is \$10. The family or institution rate is \$12. Cheques payable to the Society can be mailed to our post box.

Marj Allen, membership secretary, is now accepting your 2005 renewal fee, due in February.

ARCHIVES

The EHS had the chance to employ a student again this year and were thrilled with the work of Robert Kellas of Acton. Robert, who is returning to the University of Guelph this autumn, completed a great amount of work for the Archives. He scanned 1474 photographs to archival digital standard and burned them onto CD-ROMs. With the assistance of Archivist Mark Rowe, he processed many photographs; bring our total to over 16 000! Robert entered data on negatives from the *Georgetown Independent* from 1973 to 1975 and 1980. He also processed collections from the Kinsmen and the Georgetown Horticultural Society. We thank Robert for his great contribution to local history and wish him the best in his studies.

Karen Hunter, Dawn Livingstone and Sherry Westphal continue to work on updating the

finding aid, with a view to getting it onto our website for public use.

LEATHERTOWN Festival

The crowds were out once again on Mill Street, Acton for the August Leathertown Festival. Interest was high at the EHS display. Mark Rowe manned the booth representing the Society.

HALTON-PEEL OGS

Chinguacousy Branch Library, Lower Level, 150 Central Park Drive, Bramalea.

Call Betty Cameron at 905-792-0907

Sept.25- Louise St Dennis, *Citing Your Sources*

Oct. 23 - Sharon Murphy, *Timelines Research on Preservation of Photographs and Documents*. Oakville Public Library, 120 Navy Street Oakville

Nov. 25 – Brian Gilchrist, *TBA*

STREETSVILLE HIST. SOCIETY

Walking tour of historic Streetsville will start at 10 a.m. on Sat. Sept. 17 and at 1 p.m. on Sunday Oct. 16th. They begin promptly at the Red Hill Art Glass, 271 Queen Street South. Call the BIA at 905.858.5974.

BRAMPTON HIST. SOCIETY

The Society meets at Heart Lake Presbyterian Church, 25 Ruth Ave. at 7:15 p.m.

September 15: *Jim Leonard*, Heritage Coordinator, City of Brampton “Brampton’s Pioneer Cemeteries”

October 20: The History of Bramalea featuring Lynda Voegtle.

November 17: Brian Gilchrist of the Peel Heritage Complex.

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society meets at the Waldie Blacksmith Shop at 16 James Street at 8p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Harvest Festival at the Thomas House, Lakeside Park

Sunday, September 25, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Thomas House closes for the season

Wednesday, November 16: 7:30 p.m.
 "A History of Sheet Music in Canada from Pioneer Times"
 A Talk and Taped Music Presentation by
 John Rutherford
 Knox Presbyterian Church - Lakeshore Rd.
 E. and Dunn St. (89 Dunn St. Entrance)
 Admission Free Donations Welcome
 For information about the Oakville
 Historical Society and the collection, please
 telephone (905) 844-2695.



Doris Treleaven and Gerry Inglis pose in front of the restored powder magazine at the Limehouse Conservation Area. It was officially opened in July 2005.

HHH INVENTORIES

The 2004 inventory of Charles Street, Georgetown, prepared by Heritage Halton Hills, is available for purchase from the EHS for \$10. The inventory covers homes that appeared on the 1934 fire insurance map of Georgetown. HHH will soon publish a 2005 heritage inventory of the village of Stewarttown. The Society also has for sale the 1991 inventory of heritage buildings in the Esquesing area of Halton Hills.

CALL FOR MEETING IDEAS

Your Historical Society executive has worked hard to book a variety of interesting meeting topics but we wonder if we're missing some good ideas? Are there some topics you have thought would be nice to hear about? Do you remember a meeting from the past that you'd like repeated? Do

you know of an interesting speaker who would speak to us for a reasonable fee or perhaps even *gratis*? The topics can be local history or of a broader nature. Please e-mail your ideas to mrowe6@cogeco.ca or speak to any member of the executive.

LOSS OF HORNBY DRILL SHED

A fire in August gutted the vacant house of the Late Frank Chisholm, long-time member of the EHS. The Fire Department advised Mr. Chisholm's heirs to secure the property and they applied for a demolition permit for everything on the Steeles Avenue property. That included the 1867 Hornby Drill Shed! The shed, or more accurately, barn, was moved to Chisholm's property where he employed it as a barn. Unfortunately the old boards were in bad shape and several windows had been punched into the Esquesing white pine. The demolition permit was granted by Heritage Halton Hills. Frank Chisholm is shown in front of the Drill Shed in 1990 (EHSp944)



EHS APPLIES FOR TRILLIUM GRANT

The Society has applied for a Trillium grant to pay for publication of our newest publication on the history of Georgetown. This will replace our 1991 publication, long out of print. EHS Archivist Mark Rowe has been working on the book for a year now and the draft is currently being edited.

DEVEREAUX HOUSE

The “Friends of Devereaux House” are in the process of preserving this historic farmhouse. This brick one and a half storey residence built in the 1850s reflects the history of a typical rural pioneer family.

The house is located on town owned land where a cemetery and sports fields are scheduled to be developed. The restored building and its gardens would provide a focal point for the area and could serve a variety of community purposes as well as preserve the agricultural heritage of our community.



The home itself was built by Elijah Devereaux, a member of the local sedentary militia, who purchased 100 acres from William Facer, a United Empire Loyalist, who had received a 200 acre land grant for the military service. When Elijah’s first wife died, he married Catherine and eventually added the remaining 100 acres to his farm. For more than 100 years, the land continued to be farmed by the Devereaux family until the death of John (Jack) Devereaux in 1972.

Devereaux House is an excellent example of a 19th century Ontario farm house with its brick and gingerbread detailing.... The picturesque gothic style of the centre gable window and its round arches are quatrefoil (four lobed). The cut-outs serve to divert snow and ice from the entrance.

This distinctive blend of elegance and practicality is also reflected in the use of two brick colours. A frugally resourceful builder was able to create the impression of real rusticated (rough stone) quoins inspired by Italian palaces and the columns used to flank entrance bays.

Popular gothic patterns such as the trefoil, quatrefoil and the cruciform or cross-shape are abundant in the farm house brickwork. The effect adds elegance to the structure, but it was easy to do. All it took was a brick stretcher (or long side) and a header (or end brick) centred on the top and bottom. This simple design creates an instant cruciform, which is not only a stunning design, but helps the building to stay up!

There is also a distinctive finial accent on the centre gable peak. Although the gable arch points heavenward, the finial, with its pronounced drop portion and kingpin above, anchors it to the earth. This house with its eclectic 19th century architecture typifies an era and is a confident voice from our community’s rural past that should be preserved for future generations.

OLD TIME ANTIQUE AUCTION

The Friends of Devereaux House are sponsoring an auction to raise funds for the restoration of the structure. They are currently looking for donations of china, silver, small furnishings, jewellery, paintings, ornaments, memorabilia and collectables. Tax receipts will be provided. Contact Carol Lawson at 905-877-3753 or Barb Skinner at 905-877-5731.

AUCTION on Saturday 19th November 2005

For more information and updates, check our website at www.devereauxhouse.ca or contact Ann Lawlor at 905.877-5662 or e-mail her at ann@lawlor.com.

MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS!

Please come to our October meeting to enjoy the photos from our 16 000 strong collection and more importantly to confirm or inform us about who is in the picture, where the picture was taken and why it was taken! Many heads may help us to better describe the photo in our database, making it of more use to the public.

Here are a few to start us off!

P10166 – Two women at Smith & Stone



EHS p33



EHS p330



P8066 Man and woman holding silver tray and pitcher. -From the Georgetown Herald.



p1103 Boy in Highland garb!



P589 portrait of a boy on a tricycle with a girl standing beside him



P329 Two Friends?



P1115 Man standing beside railway tracks.