

ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

Vol. 25 No. 2

May - June 2000

Welcome to **Ghost Towns in Ontario**. "Ghost Towns - in Ontario - you say?"

Actually there are quite a few of them. You can find them scattered along side roads, near waterways, in mining locales and some even sit alongside major highways. We don't pretend to be experts and were it not for the research efforts of a number of people, this site wouldn't have been possible. Many thanks first of all to Ron Brown, author of a superb collection of books covering Ghost Towns, railways and other interesting explorations of Ontario, to David Nemirovsky (not the hockey player) for his fabulous collection of maps and to the numerous others who've shared their experiences, memories and stories.

Our Ontario section is updated monthly. Ghosttownpix.com

Cheltenham Brick Works The name says it all. In Southern Ontario, brick was the predominant building material during the late Victorian and early 20th century periods. Cheltenham Brick Works was a tiny worker's community, situated between the villages of Cheltenham and Terra Cotta. Due to an abundance of 'Medina Shale', a hard clay, renowned for its excellent brick-making qualities, a number of brick works were established in the area and in 1914, one of them, the Interprovincial Brick Company, acquired the site in order to expand their operations. They built a massive set of six downdraft kilns and one continuous burning kiln which enabled them to produce 90,000 bricks at a time. Rather than living in nearby Cheltenham or Terra Cotta, many of the workers preferred to pay the much lower rent of \$13.00 per month to live in one of the 14 houses also located on the site. However, by the 1950s things had changed. The village of Cheltenham was on the verge of dying, sustained only by the brick works. In 1958, Domtar acquired the site, promptly closed up the brick works and demolished the houses. For now, the giant kilns, fenced off and inaccessible, remain standing, a massive ghostly ruin and a stark reminder of the area's earlier industrial history.

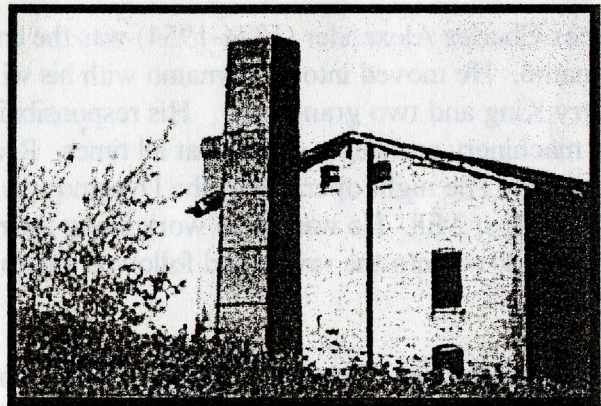


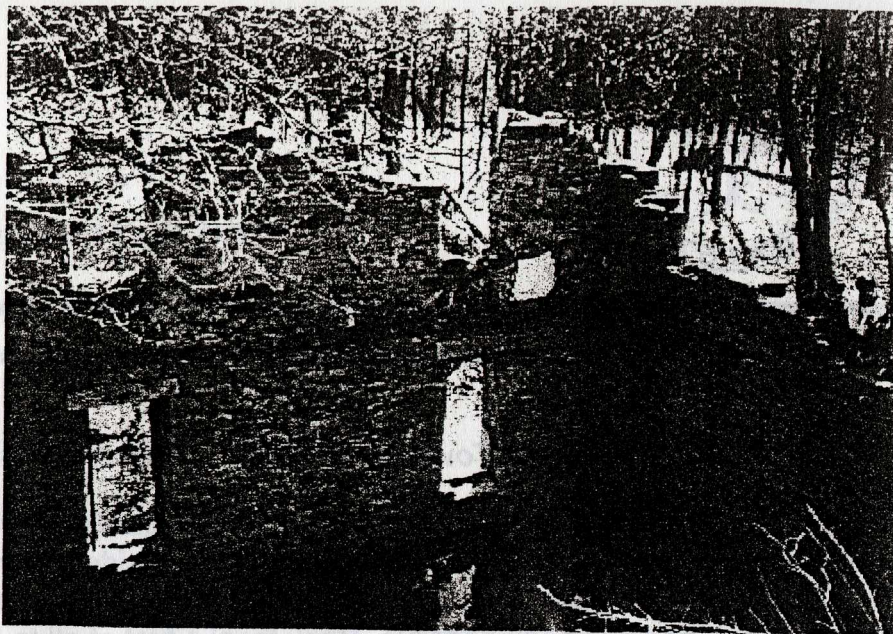
Photo by Jerry Danyleyko at
Ghosttownpix.com

Ron Brown, author of Ghost Towns of Ontario, will be the speaker at the May meeting of the Esquesing Historical Society on Wednesday 10 May at Knox Presbyterian Church, Georgetown.

Ghosts In The Credit Valley

by J.M. Rowe

Ghost towns are hard to find in this area - even abandoned village sites are being reworked to provide modern housing. However, the former Barber Dynamo is certainly a ghost of a previous age. An electrical generating plant may not be romantic but the ruins recall the infancy of electricity and the dynamo was also a home to the Alexander family.



Built in 1888, the Dynamo generated electricity from a head of water created by a dam across the River Credit at that spot. Two wires carried the power up to the Barber Paper Mills on River Road. It served the industrial needs of John R. Barber until 1913, when the Mills were served by Ontario Hydro.

EHS p1368 April 1992

James Charles Alexander (1874-1954) was the employee at the Barber Mills given the task of running the Dynamo. He moved into the dynamo with his wife Maud (Claridge), his daughter Edith, his son-in-law Gerry King and two grandsons. His responsibilities included turning the power on and off, maintaining the machinery and being on hand at all times. Requests were telephoned from the Mill down to the Dynamo. The night operator of the Dynamo was William Snyder, who lived at the top of hill to the east of the Paper Mill. He walked to work along the railway tracks to the trestle about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile upstream, climbed down into the ravine and followed a path along the river - doubtless the same path hikers use today.

A spring flood of ice took out the Paper Mill dam in 1911, which crippled the Dynamo as well. After it became redundant in 1913, Alexander continued to live there as caretaker. Young Edith Alexander took to her bed here on Christmas Day, 1918 with the Spanish Influenza. She stayed in bed until Easter Sunday. His wife Maud died there of pneumonia on 31 March, 1923, in spite of the doctor travelling across the fields from the 10th Line to help her. Further tragedy ensued six weeks later when two year old Terry King, following his father to work, became lost and was discovered dead under the old iron bridge on 15 May, 1923.

The Dynamo was boarded up and abandoned after that. Charlie Alexander moved to a cottage on Hall Road in Georgetown. He later advertised for a wife and married Jessie Gertrude Bryant of London, England.

So here is a ghostly ruin of our very own!

Replies to Letters of Inquiry

November 27, 1999

Helen E. Bett Samuelson,
3200 30th Avenue West,
Seattle, Washington,
98199
United States of America



Dear Ms. Samuelson,

I am writing in reply to your letter of November 8th, 1999 which you sent to the *Georgetown Independent*. It was passed to me from Ted Brown, photographer for the paper. I represent the Esquesing Historical Society. Esquesing township was surveyed in part by Charles Kennedy, brother of George. Georgetown is part of Esquesing township.

We certainly concur in your disappointment at seeing trash in Silver Creek. We hope the local environmental group will organize some clean-up of the site.

In regards to your family search, we must draw your attention to the Archives of the Society which are located in the Georgetown library, just around the corner from where you were exploring this summer. We have quite a growing file on the Kennedy family. Our latest addition to that file was a picture of Harriet Kennedy, the very same "first white child born in Georgetown". I have printed a copy for you on the letter. The above phrase is inscribed on her tombstone in Georgetown's Greenwood Cemetery, about two metres from her parents' stone. That is the only "monument" to her in town.

The red brick house you refer to stood on Mill Street, just behind Main Street. It was demolished about 1985 to build a medical building. It is just up the road from the old post office. His brother Charles' house still stands on the edge of town on property now owned by *The Watchtower*.

Finally, George Kennedy's contributions to St. George's Anglican Church, of which he was not a member, consisted of £50. While this was a considerable sum in those days, it was not the entire funding required.

I hope this information answers your questions. Thank you for your interest in Georgetown.

April 21, 2000

109 Maypole Lane,
Kings Heath, Birmingham,
England

Dear Mr. Hale,

Your letter to the Glen Williams Town Hall was directed to me by our local postman. Our Town Hall is merely a community hall. Glen Williams is today part of the Corporation of the Town of Halton Hills. However, I am also the Archivist for the Esquesing Historical Society, of which, Glen Williams and Georgetown are a part.

I checked the births, marriages, deaths, census, and cemetery records for the MODLEY name and had no results. For the FAGAN name, there was a death notice for a Dr. FAGAN in the *Georgetown Herald* on 15 July, 1942; a news item for Hadley Fagan in the *Acton Free Press*, on 21 August, 1947 and a burial at the Glen Williams Cemetery for Sydney H. FAGAN (1898-1970) and his wife Agnes M. FAGAN (1907-).

In our index of several school ledgers, a Violet MODLEY attended Glen Williams Public School from 1909 until a note in the 1915 register noted Violet MODLEY moved away during the school year. She was age 7 in 1909.

Finally I checked the ledger for Wheeler's General Store. In 1912 - 1913 accounts were opened for Mrs. R. MODLEY and A. MODLEY.

I did a preliminary search of land records, but did not find a MODLEY in this era. I assume he rented, as many did in this village. In one of Mr. Wheeler's rent books there was an entry, difficult to read, which may have been MODLEY, on Main Street.

Since you give no indication where the house they lived in was, I cannot tell you if it is still standing. However, the majority of the village buildings are still intact from the last century.

Thank you for your interesting letter. A "rambling" letter, as you called it, may be very unbusiness-like, but it is of great interest to historians and genealogists. Your letter and this reply will be put into the Genealogy section of the Esquesing Historical Society Archives in Georgetown. If you can provide a description of the house you seek, I may be able to pin it down. A family tree would be appreciated, since you did not give a first name for any member of the MODLEY family.

I hope these tidbits of information will prove useful to you and your family.

HERITAGE HALTON HILLS SIGNAGE PROGRAMME

As many are aware Heritage Halton Hills, on which the Esquesing Historical Society is represented, has begun a signage programme for homes older than 1939. This is simply an attempt to identify older buildings. It does not imply Heritage designation. Brochures to apply for a sign are available at the Acton and Georgetown Libraries, Glen Williams Town Hall and the Civic Centre. The cost is \$100 and research usually takes 2 to 4 months. The following buildings have been researched as of 1 May, 2000 and will shortly have their signs mounted.

Lot 21, Concession 11, Esquesing, 10th Line built in 1852 by Joel Williams, Farmer.

Lot 18, Concession 1, Esquesing, 17 Sideroad built in 1853 by Sidney Smith, Lumber merchant.

51 Edith Street, Georgetown, built in 1857 by Francis Barclay, Dry Goods merchant.

17 Ewing Street, Georgetown, built 1864 by Thomas and Martha (Kennedy) Wilsey.

19 McNabb Street, Georgetown, built 1908 by Susan Drinkwater, widow.

45 Charles Street, Georgetown, built in 1859 by Walter McKay, carpenter.

5 Tweedle Street, Glen Williams, built in 1907 by Sykes and Ainley Knitting Mills.

20 Guelph Street, Georgetown, built in 1917 by John J. Gibbens, Baker

Society Notes

EHS EXECUTIVE

Sherry Westfahl	873-7145	President
Karen Hunter	838-2109	
Dawn Livingstone	877-6506	
Doug Cole	877-3657	
Stephen Blake	877-8251	
J. Mark Rowe	877-9510	
Carol Wood		

EXECUTIVE OPPORTUNITY

The appeal for new volunteers for your executive has been rewarded! Carol Wood has joined the EHS executive as publications officer.

ARCHIVAL NEWS

Transferring *The Acton Free Press / Georgetown Independent* negatives to archival boxes began in March. Karen Hunter organized Mark Rowe and Marj Allen to start the process. We're pleased to announce that the initial task of transferring the negatives to the Archives has been completed. Sherry Halliday joined the group to complete the transfer. Many thanks are offered to Ken Kirkwood who allowed us to store the three filing cabinets at his home.

A large chunk of the operating budget of the EHS has been expended to purchase archival boxes and folders to properly store the



Marj Allen and Karen Hunter tackle the first cabinet in March, 2000!

newspaper negatives. We have stretched the budget to purchase a negative scanner which will be used to scan all negatives which the Society

has, so that they can be easily identified and added to the photo collection.

The EHS has once again applied for a summer student grant. Besides the usual administrative tasks, scanning negatives will be a major part of the summer tasks.

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

The Esquesing Historical Society has an official web site on the World Wide Web. You can visit us at

<www.hhpl.on.ca/sigs/ehs/home.html>

Send your e-mail to rowem@aztec-net.com or dlvngstn@stn.net

EHS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter was prepared by John Mark Rowe with assistance from Karen Hunter and Dawn Livingstone.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership fees for 2000 are now due! The individual rate is \$10. The family or institution rate is \$12. Cheques payable to the Society can be posted to our post box.

Our 2000 membership now stands at 102! It has been several years since we passed the hundred member mark. Thank you very much to everyone who has renewed!

TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

The EHS will be preparing an application to apply for a grant from the Trillium Foundation to write a history of the Town of Acton. There has never been a survey history of Acton written, while both Georgetown and Glen Williams have each had two (all currently out-of-print).

NEW MEMBERSHIP PAMPHLET

Sherry Westfahl and Dawn Livingstone have worked together to produce an interesting new membership pamphlet for the EHS. Good quality paper bearing a well-presented invitation to join the Society will hopefully attract new members. The new application was first available at the March meeting.

STEWARTTOWN PAMPHLET

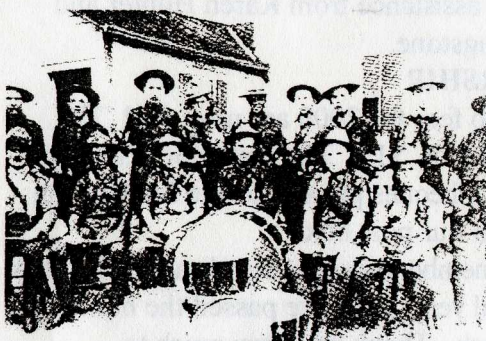
The Esquesing Historical Society is pleased to announce the publication of the 11th pamphlet in our series. The former capital of Esquesing

Township, Stewarttown is the subject of a pamphlet published by John Mark Benbow Rowe, Archivist of the Society. It will be available at our meetings for the usual price of 25 cents. While you're there be sure to update your collection with other pamphlets you may be missing

NORTH HALTON SCOUTING BOOK

The Scouting Spirit by John Mark Rowe was published in February. The book is illustrated with several photographs. It sells for \$5 a copy and will be available at Society meetings or by phoning the author. After outlining the founding of Scouting in 1910, it explains the organization of the sections and groups. A chapter follows the history of North Halton District and then a

short history of each section is given.



Acton Scout Troop Band about 1916
EHS p1386

COUNTRY HERITAGE PARK...

The Farm Museum Changes its Name

What's in a name? A great deal, according to research conducted by the board of Country Heritage Experience Inc., (CHE), before changing the name of the Farm Museum to Country Heritage Park.

The new name and logo were unveiled at the CHE's annual general meeting held March 24. Board Chair, Dr. Rob McLaughlin, explained, "It's essential that the name appeals to the large urban population that lives in close proximity to the site, as well as conveys the interactive nature of our exhibits. We wanted to ensure that we were making the right decision, so we conducted research with our various target markets and listened to what they told

us."

"The words country and heritage proved to be overwhelming favourites with the research respondents," continued McLaughlin. "Heritage reflected the site's historical roots while country was preferred over both farm and rural."

The research concluded that farm was too limited as the site is "more than a farm, it's a whole community, with a church, school, shops, etc." While rural accurately described the site, the word was not well understood by urbanites...

Country Heritage Park (formerly the Farm Museum), an interactive heritage park depicting agriculture and rural life over the last 150 years and into the future, is located on an 80 acre site, with over 30 exhibit buildings and 20,000 artifacts.

Nestled in the shadow of the Niagara Escarpment, south of Highway 401, on Tremaine Road west of Milton, it offers education programs for school children, farm animals, special events and attractions, tour group programs, day camps, historical interpretation of exhibits, an outstanding collection of antique tractors, steam engines, farm equipment, and rural life.

-*Country Routes*, April 2000

ALBION BOLTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAMME

May 28 Walkabout in West Bolton (1:30 p.m. for a 90 minute walk)

Please call 857-6741 for further information.

BRAMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

May 18th George Duncan on early 19th Century Architecture in Ontario.

Meetings are held at Heart lake Presbyterian Church, 25 Ruth Avenue, Brampton at 7 p.m. Admission fee of \$5 for non-members.

SAD PASSING

A member of the Esquesing Historical Society, Marjorie Kirkwood died in April. She was the wife of Harvey Kirkwood.

MAPLE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

On 26-28 April, the main building of Maple Avenue Baptist Church was demolished. The hall was left intact. A new church is planned.

ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

- Wed. 10 May 2000 **Ghost Towns of Ontario** - Well-known writer Ron Brown of Toronto will speak on the ghost towns of Ontario, the subject of a recent book. Mr. Brown will highlight former settlements from this area.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 14 June 2000 **Walking Tour of Norval** - Our season closes with our annual pot-luck dinner and a guided tour of historical Norval. Cathy Gastle, Town Councillor and unflagging promoter of Norval will lead us on an historical ramble. If you cannot make the dinner, join us for the walk.
NORVAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Norval, 6:00 ; 7:00 p.m.
- Wed. 13 Sept 2000 **Tales of Ballinafad** - Join the Society for a late summer walk-about of Esquesing's northern border village! Ballinafad Tweedsmuir Histories will be on display in the Hall where former Women's Institute members will share history about the village.
BALLINAFAD COMMUNITY HALL, 32nd Sideroad, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 11 Oct. 2000 **Dominion Seed House Days** - Former Seed House manager, Doug Peck, will reminisce about the history of the Bradley / Harding family business which today sits at the centre of Georgetown.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 8 Nov. 2000 **Avro Arrow Saga** - Peter Zuuring, founder and first director of the Avro Alliance, will travel to Georgetown to talk about the ill-fated fighter jet of the A.V. Row company. Many employees of the company lived in the Georgetown - Acton area.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT NO CHARGE!

Please bring your own cup for refreshments to help protect our environment.

Norval on the Credit -

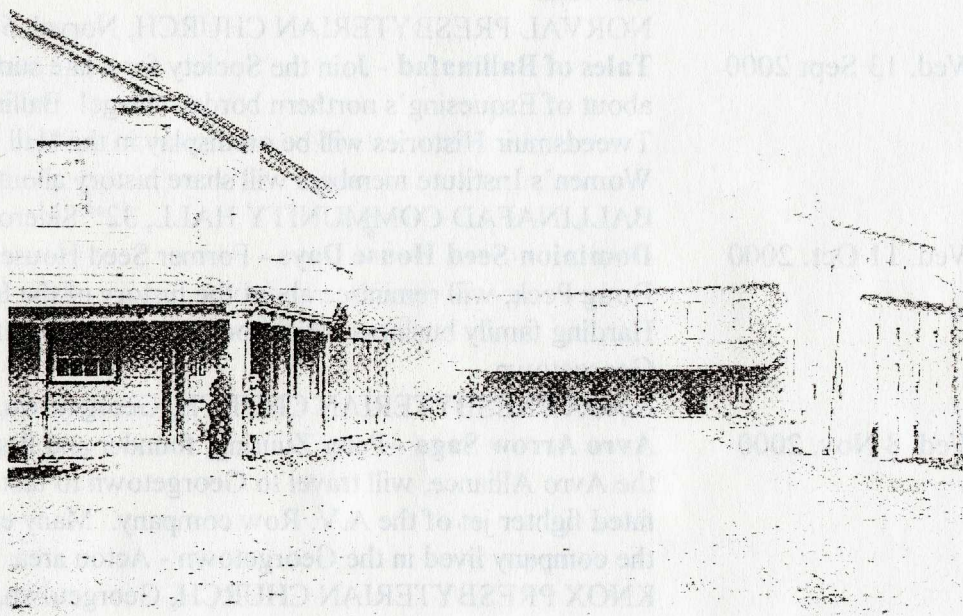
The end of the year is just around the corner and that means it's time for the annual Esquesing Historical Society pot luck dinner. This popular event will be held at Norval Presbyterian Church at 6 p.m. Bring yourself, your family, friends and a delicious dish to share! Bring a main course, a salad or dessert! Also bring plates, cutlery and a cup. The Society will have coffee and tea brewing as usual.

At Seven p.m. local resident, historian and Town Councilor Kathy Gastle will lead a walking tour of the village. Please join us at 6 p.m. or 7 p.m., whichever is convenient!

Hollywood Hotel & Flour Mills.

"This picture, probably taken around the turn of the last century shows the old Hollywood Hotel often referred to as the

Commercial Headquarters of the community. It was gutted by fire in 1993. Built in the late 1840s or early 1850s it was a favourite stop-over for travellers using the plank road from York to Guelph. Whiskey was 5 cents a glass and beer was never in short supply. Coach horses were accommodated in the livery stables behind the Hotel. The Hotel was sold in the late 1930s for a very small sum, refurbished as a Beer parlour, and because Peel County was dry, Norval was the first place to quench your thirst over the county line.



EHS p10187

The Hotel did a roaring trade and was a veritable gold mine for successive owners. When the Grist Mill was damaged beyond repair by Hurricane Hazel in 1957 the old Mill race was filled in to allow more parking space for the Hotel. The Norval Flour Mill, built by James McNab in 1828 and later owned by Robert Noble from 1868 to 1920, had an excellent reputation for the quality of the flour that was produced. The grand old Mill burned down in the winter of 1930, a very sad day for the whole community." - Mary Maxwell.

Norval School Report (*Georgetown Herald*, 11 February, 1914)

Sen.IV - Irene Foster, Margaret Russell, Evelyn Pentin, Victor Knight, Alice Adair.

Jun.IV - Bessie Laird, Jim Russell, Roland Laird, Rachel Moore, Webster Black, Margaret Graham, James Hughes, Grace Fiddler.

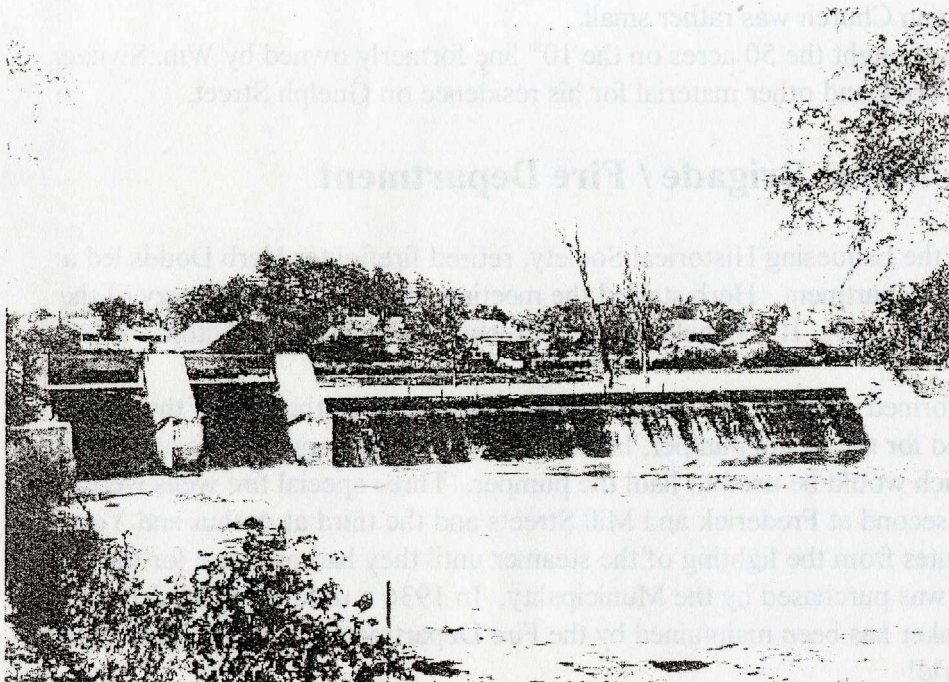
Junior III - Harold Smellie, Walter Fiddler, Olive Russell, Howard Whitfield, Ethel Iouth.

Junior II - Albert Hunter, Alycia Whitfield, Hazel Hughes, Whilma Russell, Frank Hughes, Victor Lewis.

Senior I - Scott Ferguson, Winnie Knight, Robbie Russell, Lillian Green, Charlie Rankin, Ivy Whitfield, Murray Laird.

Norval Dam, 1912.

"Taken from the end of Noble's lane shows the new dam with its new gates and the new pond above it, with the elms of the former meadow still standing. The first dam was about 200 feet further up the river



EHS p10823

where the Mill race was detoured or siphoned off. The meadow was dug out to form the pond, and ice was harvested off that pond for years until modern refrigeration took over. In a dry period, when the river flow was down, brackets were put across the dam and the gates were closed in order to channel more water power through the mill race. You can see the brackets across the apron of the dam, plank slats 4 inches wide, 1 inch thick, and 15-18 inches high were fitted into spaced holes in the apron -- then several 12 feet long boards were tacked in front of the

brackets and the force of the water held them there. If a flash flood caught the dam with its brackets on all they could do was open the gates, it was just too dangerous to walk that apron to take them off. It was on this Credit River in 1888 that the first dynamo was built two miles above the village. It was the first Hydro Electric Plant in North America and transmitted power to the Barber Paper Mill in Georgetown." - Mary Maxwell

NORVAL - *The Georgetown Herald*, 11 February, 1914

The Metropolitan Bank opened a branch here on Monday, in the building formerly occupied by the Farmers Bank. Mr. Davies is the manager. Mr. J. W. Campbell made the first deposit.

Mr. Geo. Laing of Winnipeg spent a few days visiting his aunt, Mrs. R. Noble last week. The West is agreeing with George.

Mr. James Brown has bought the 200 acre farm on the 9th Con. From Jos. Leslie. It was the Paxton Farm.

The Rural Mail Route has started south from here by the 10th line to the base, then then up the 9th to the 15 side road, then down the Georgetown road to Norval. J. Hewson jr is the mail carrier.

Several young men from the village and vicinity were up before magistrates McClure and Noble on Tuesday 3rd, charges with assaulting J. Clark, one of the parties concerned in the recent elopement case, by ducking him in a ditch full of water during the recent thaw. They were each fined \$1.00 and costs, amount in all to \$12 or \$13. To show how the popular sentiment in the case runs, a group of leading men settled for the boys.

Its romantic that the corner lot on which the old red tavern now stands has been sold and a new building will be erected on it next summer.

What with the College building, the new Bank, the Dental office, and other new buildings in contemplation, the running of the Suburban Ry and another large change in one of our industries, won't we just go.

Communion services were held in all three churches Sunday morning, and the attendance at the evening service in the Presbyterian Church was rather small.

Mr. Richard Graham has bought the 50 acres on the 10th line formerly owned by Wm. Switzer. Mr. Switzer is laying down the brick and other material for his residence on Guelph Street.

Acton Fire Brigade / Fire Department

At the April meeting of the Esquesing Historical Society, retired firefighter Herb Dodds led a discussion about the Acton Fire Department. Herb started the meeting off by sharing a history of the Department written by his late wife, Ann. It was held at Knox Presbyterian Church in Acton. A few notes from the meeting follow.

A bucket Brigade was formed in 1879. In 1883, a lean-to was added to the rear of the Town Hall. It served as a storage shed for the steam pumper, ladder and wagon. George Ritchie on Church Street had a team of horses which would be used to haul the pumper. Three special fire wells were dug. One was at the Town Hall, the second at Frederick and Mill Streets and the third at Arthur and Young Streets. It only took three minutes from the lighting of the steamer until they had pressure for the hoses. In 1921, a used Ford fire truck was purchased by the Municipality. In 1936 a used 1927 Studebaker was added to the fleet. The Studebaker has been maintained by the Fire Department for use in parades and is now the only one left in the world!

During the war, the old brass pumper was sold for scrap for the war effort. It would be quite the museum piece today, but the needs of Canada's armed forces were very real, during those years. A 1952 Chevy was added to the crammed shed behind the Town Hall. In 1957, the three neighbouring Townships purchased a truck so that Acton would respond to their calls. That necessitated the demolition of the shed and the erection of a two-bay single storey hall. A second storey was added in 1978.

A town water-works system was installed in 1921. A water tank was built near Kingham Road to maintain pressure in the hydrants. When the fire alarm was sounded, Charles Wilson started the pumps at the pumphouse.

In the early days the Town Hall bell was rung to signal firefighters. Mrs. McDonald of Bower Avenue had the task of ringing the bell when a fire was discovered. The bell was replaced by an electric siren, one in the Town Hall and another in the Force Electric Building. Beardmore also had a steam-operated siren on the boiler room that issued a "hoot-hoot". In 1957, the Bell Telephone operators would trigger the siren when a fire call was made. A firefighter could then pick up any phone in town and the operator would give the address. Today firefighters answer a silent alarm. Acton answers an average of 100 calls per year, which include medical assists.

Some of the worst fires they recalled were the Dominion Hotel, Ernie Barr's store and AP Green Refractories. The Hotel fire lasted 13 hours and resulted in the death of a boarder at the Hotel.

Herb Dodds, Mick Holmes, Kirby McPhail and others also recalled the tremendous support which the community gave their firefighters. The annual Fireman's Ball was held in the small hall upstairs of the fire hall, yet they actually sold 2000 to 2500 tickets each year.

This meeting was taped and will be added to the Archives of the Society. To borrow any tapes, contact the Archivist directly.