



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

Vol. 28 No. 4

November - December 2003

Hotels

OF GEORGETOWN AND DISTRICT

THE EXCHANGE HOTEL

Harry Wright, Prop.

Under Mr. Wright's management this is the right house, all right, for the traveler who wants a comfortable stopping place, most conveniently situated to the railway station. Every one of the

Grand Trunk's eighteen daily trains stop within a hundred yards of the front door of the hotel. Mr. Wright came here from Nobleton in June of the present year, succeeding Mr. J.E. Kaiser. He is a comparatively young man, but has been associated with the hotel business for twenty seven years. Mr. Wright's parents were Somerset people, but were living in Wales at the time he first began to make a noise in the world. Welshman though he is, by the accident of birth, Mr. Wright has had much of the advantage that we Canadians think belongs to us in this respect, for when he was but eight years of age the family came to Ontario County, and settled there, and Harry has hardly been out of the Province since that time. The Exchange hotel has comfortable and well kept bedrooms, a dining room in which only good meals are served, and stabling accommodations in keeping with the other appointments of the house. There is a well stocked bar, and those who are in need of liquid refreshments are served with ales and liquors of all the standard brands. *The Georgetown Herald*, December 17, 1913

This very historic building will be discussed by Diane Hillock proprietor of the Station Hotel (formerly the Exchange). The trains are not so frequent these days but the liquid refreshments are still available!

THE AMERICAN HOUSE

This building which was originally a public house stands at the junction of Main and Guelph Streets and is now occupied by its owner Mr. T. N. Brown, as a residence. It is of brick, two and a half storeys high and 40 by 100 feet in dimensions, with a double veranda along its entire front. It contains sixteen bedrooms, in addition to parlours, sitting, commercial, and dining rooms, offices and culinary apartment.



EXCHANGE HOTEL

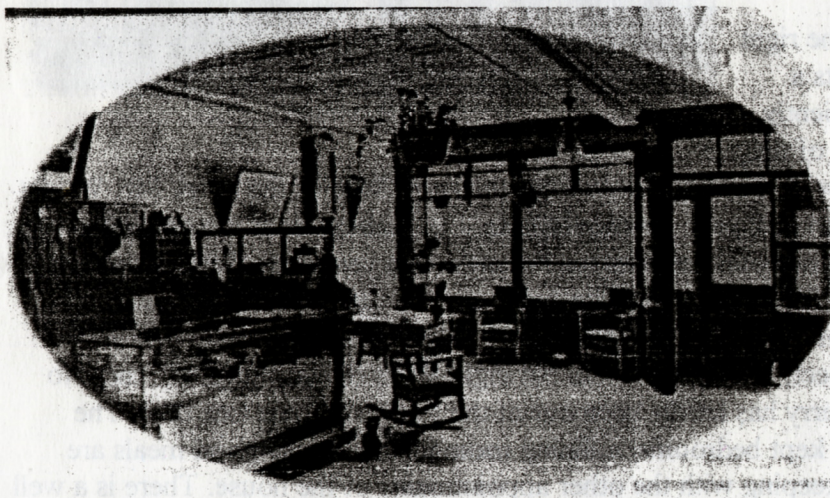
The premises cover an acre of ground and the stabling, shedding, and cellaring are ample. Mr. Brown, who is the only son of Mr. Thomas Brown, is a native of Ireland, but has spent his life since early childhood in this province, He was married in 1877 to Miss Minnie A. Campbell, of the County of Wellington. The American house, which is especially adapted for hotel purposes, can be purchased on reasonable terms. Toronto *Daily Mail*, 24th June 1893

This interesting building was purchased (we can only hope the terms were reasonable) and today sits on Guelph Street plying its custom as The George and Dragon!

THE CANADIAN HOUSE

As the wayfarer walks through the Georgetown thoroughfares and turns from Guelph street into Water street his eyes rest upon a public house which reminds him vividly of some one of the historic inns of old England. It is an unpretentious two storey frame structure but chief among the several taverns hereabout for comfort and respectability. Downy beds in cosy chambers, homelike lounging and sitting rooms, a hospitable board laden not only with substantial viands but the delicacies of the season, a bar liberally supplied with pure beverages, and a hearty welcome at all times greet the sojourner at the Canadian house which is lorded over by Mr. Harry Speirs. Toronto *Daily Mail*, 24th June 1893

Alas, this unpretentious cozy house fell into disrepair and was demolished to make room for Kentners' Catering on Mill Street.



BENNETT HOUSE

Albert Sachs, proprietor

The Bennett House, Georgetown, has been catering to the needs of the travelling public for half a century. The house was established by Mr. Bennett, who conducted it for years, and was succeeded by Mr. Archie Coffey [Coffin], a son-in-law. The present proprietor, Mr. Albert Sachs, has been in charge for the past five years, and is keeping a good house.

P635

The building, as will be seen from the photograph, is of red brick, two stories. [not shown] The picture of the rotunda shows a roomy and comfortably furnished and equipped business office, and the house throughout is quite up to the favorable impression created by the office. There are 28 bedrooms, well furnished and comfortable, and lavatories for ladies and gents on the second floor, and for gents on the ground floor. The dining room is large, well lighted, and the cuisine is of exceptionally good character, the table service being prompt and attentive. There are three commodious sample rooms for the use of commercial men, many of whom patronize this house. There is accommodation for thirty-five horses in the stables of this hotel, besides ample shed and yard room. In fact there are two barns, besides a large warehouse now leased to the I.H. Company. In connection to the hotel there is a large bar-room, well patronized. *The Georgetown Herald*, December 17, 1913

The roomy and comfortable rotunda is gone now, the Hotel replaced by The Old Bank on Main Street. Dawn Livingstone has looked into the history of this place and will tell us about the Bennett House.



EHS p8529

HOTEL McGIBBON
S.H. McGibbon, Prop.

This fine three-storey brick building occupies one of the best business corners in town, with a frontage of 56 feet on Main Street., and extending back on Mill Street for 90 feet. Mr. S.H. McGibbon, has owned and managed this hotel which bears his name for nineteen years, and has become well and favorably known to the traveling public, and the patronage extended to him must be very gratifying. There are 32 well-furnished bedrooms, and two large and well-lighted sample rooms, and it is not an uncommon experience to have all these rooms engaged. That Mr. McGibbon desires to make his guests as comfortable as possible is shown in many different ways. A steam heating plant has just been installed and every room in the house is now individually warmed. Electric lights are in use all through the house, and lavatories are conveniently placed on each floor. The dining-room accommodates forty persons at a time, and the meals served are always appetizing and satisfying. There is stabling for thirty horses, and an attentive hostler in charge. The union bus conveys passengers to and from all trains. A well stocked bar is kept open during legal hours, with obliging wine clerks in charge. *The Georgetown Herald*, December 17, 1913

ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

- Wed. 12 Nov. 2003 **Hotels, Taverns and Inns of Georgetown** - Where were the best rooms in town? Who had good stables and what were your wedding reception choices? Where was the best beer! Join the Society as we explore the hotels, taverns and inns of Georgetown. Different speakers, including Diane Hillock of the Station Hotel will share their research and stories.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- December 2003 There will not be a regular meeting this month. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
- Wed. 14 Jan, 2004 **Mapping Our Communities** - The interesting map collection of the EHS will be the subject of this hands-on meeting. Surveys, street maps, township maps, fire insurance maps are some of the categories of maps we'll have for you to touch and examine. Our latest map of Georgetown in 1854 will also be there for close inspection.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 11 Feb. 2004 **Kennedy Family of Georgetown** - family historian Elaine Robinson will speak to the Society about the extensive Kennedy family, which includes our own George Kennedy, namesake of Georgetown. This interesting family was pivotal in the settlement of this area and in the cultural life of the communities in Esquesing Township.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 12 Mar. 2004 TBA
- Wed. 14 April 2004 **Friends of the Dominion Gardens** - The extensive landscaping and work involved in re-shaping the ground of the former Dominion Seed House on Guelph Street, Georgetown will be the topic of a slide presentation by Sue Balough.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 12 May 2004 **Silvercreek!** - The hamlet, the creek, the tavern, the *murder* - all will be exposed at this meeting about a bustling boom town, now relegated to history or paved over by Trafalgar Road. Join Mark Rowe as he brings the history of this village to life!
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 9 June 2004 **Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District** - Join the Society on a walking tour of the first Heritage District in Halton Hills and other properties on Bower Avenue. This event will begin with our annual pot luck dinner at the old Acton Town Hall.
ACTON TOWN HALL, Willow Street, Acton, 6:00 / 7:15 p.m.

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT NO CHARGE!

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

PHOTOGRAPH REPRINTS

Besides the cost of printing a photo, an Archives user fee of \$5 will apply for the first photo and a \$2 fee for each subsequent photo, ordered at the same time. Postage and handling charges will also be applied. Orders require three weeks for processing.

RESEARCH REQUESTS

The EHS charges \$5.00 for the initial fee, and \$10.00 per hour. Each photocopied page will cost \$1.00. When requests are received, an estimate will be provided before work begins. Postage and handling charges also apply. Requests can be made by e-mail or regular mail, but we cannot guarantee a delivery time.

Merry Christmas 2003



Hotel McGibbon, Georgetown, dining room at Christmas, 1965. EHS p2692



Georgetown Police Department Christmas party, 16 December 1971. EHS p2993

Can anyone name the "hot doggers" above? Do let us know!

The Executive of the Esquesing Historical Society would like to thank everyone who supported the Society during the past year and would like to offer you and your family and very happy and joyful Christmas season! See you in the New Year! God Bless!

Society Notes

EHS EXECUTIVE

Stephen Blake	877-8251	President
Karen Hunter	838-2109	
Dawn Livingstone	877-6506	
Sherry Westfahl	873-7145	
J. Mark Rowe	877-9510	
Carol Wood	873-0792	
Marj Allen	877-9985	
Judy Payne	877-7627	

Don't forget to add 905 when dialing the above listed numbers.

ACHIVAL REPORT

Sherry Westfahl continues to work away at the summer project of re-numbering and re-describing the items in the Archives in preparation of re-launching our finding aid on our web-site. Karen Hunter is looking for volunteers to help in the physical re-numbering of the items at the library.

Kay Dills recently sent the EHS several Limehouse photographs and news clippings for our Archives. The Society purchased a 1955 Georgetown Fall Fair prize list for the Archives.

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

Canadian Council of Archives web site:

<www.CdnCouncilArchives.ca>

EHS NEWSLETTER

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

MEMBERSHIP

Our paid 2003 memberships stand at 97. Any further memberships purchased may be applied to the 2004 year. Renewals are now being accepted.

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, will gladly accept your fees at the next meeting.

ELECTIONS ESQUESING!!!

The annual elections for the Esquesing Historical Society are fast approaching! If you would like to volunteer for any of the positions available on the executive of the EHS, please let us know.

We always welcome an extra pair of hands and your great ideas to make our Society serve our community better. Contact Karen Hunter to make your intentions known!

ACTON: THE HISTORY OF LEATHERTOWN

The Olde Book Shoppe will host a book signing by our own Mark Rowe on Saturday 8 November starting at 1 p.m. Located on Eastern Avenue, across from the Olde Hide House, the Acton store has many new and used books to offer. Come to Acton on November 8th and get your copy of *Acton: The History of Leathertown* personally autographed by the author. A great idea for Christmas!

Books can also be purchased at regular meetings or by contacting Publications Officer, Carol Wood. She can e-mailed at <hobo@globalserve.net>.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Please consider supporting your Society by offering time. Contact Stephen Blake, Karen Hunter or any executive member to offer your help. Absolutely no experience is needed. We have fun and learn while we go along.

IMAGES HALTON

The Halton Hills Public Library has launched Images Halton. The images of the EHS will be available here in connection with images of the other Halton areas, allowing a single search for all related Halton images. Visit the site at <http://images.halinet.on.ca>

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

They usually meet the third Thursday of each month at 8 p.m. at the Waldie Blacksmith Shop, 16 James Street, Milton.

November 20 at 7:30 Ron Brown will speak on Ghost Towns of Ontario. This will be at Hugh Foster Hall

December 18 at 6:30 will be the annual Christmas potluck dinner complete with Christmas carols.

BRAMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Meetings are held every third Thursday of the month at 7:15 p.m. at Heart Lake Presbyterian Church, 25 Ruth Avenue, Brampton. There is a \$5 admission fee.

STREETSVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our December meeting / outing will be at the Robinson Bray House. After our short general meeting we will learn about tea blending and be treated with scones and tea. Cost is \$10 per person and is limited. Please contact Anne Byard at 905-814-5958.

ONTARIO GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

November 23: J. Brian Gilchrist "It is the little things that make the difference: Understanding genealogical words and terms."

January 25: "More Brick Walls - Sharing your Genealogical trials and triumphs: an interactive workshop"

February 22: Joe MacDougall on "Genealogy in Cape Breton and Nova Scotia"

All the above meetings are at Chinguacousy Branch Library, 150 Central Park Drive, Brampton.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS!

The Society is planning a meeting on aerial photographs and would like to know who has aerial photos of their properties or any place in Esquesing township that we could use for the meeting! Please send us an e-mail or contact Karen Hunter to let us know. We'll keep a list and remind you when the meeting date has been set.

NEW LOCAL HISTORY

Rockwood: A Mosaic of Memories

An entertaining and moving account of nearly 200 years of small town growth. Deborah Quaile uncovers the stories behind hardy settlers, travelling medicine shows, ghost folklore, strange street names and Callithumpians. From industrious hard work and heartfelt memories to the heyday of growth in the 21st century, this recounting offers untold chapters as well as a new perspective on Rockwood's history.

"Here is a kaleidoscope of the people, places and events that shape our community's history; the zest of our present, the wonders dreamt of our future. Catch the spirit of the pioneer in personal stories of delicious hauntings, or courageous accomplishments that carry the tide of time into our characters today. A reference book – the essence of Rockwood and Eramosa – to consult and amuse for the next 100 years."

Katherine L. Gordon, author, editor, publisher, reviewer

Information:

Over 250 pages with B&W illustrations by Susan Strachan Johnson, as well as old and new photographs, bibliography and index. Available October 2003, \$20 + GST. At select local Rockwood stores, or by calling Deb Quaile at 519-856-2386. <http://home.cogeco.ca/~dquaile>

Available in October at select local stores or from the author. Proceeds to local charitable works.

HHH INVENTORIES FOR SALE

The EHS has acquired some recent heritage inventories commissioned by Heritage Halton Hills. Queen Street, Georgetown is available at meetings for \$12 while Bower Avenue, Acton can be obtained for \$8. Unfortunately, the EHS members discount does not apply to these items.

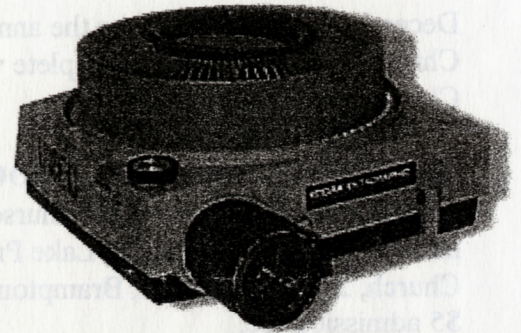
ACTON BAND HONOURED IN BOOK

Kay Dills has published - and sold out - her latest chapter on Acton's history entitled, *Marching Down Mill Street*. It chronicles the long history of the Acton Citizens' Band. She hopes to print a second run of 100 copies in the near future.

Kodak Pre-discloses Plans To Discontinue Slide Projectors and Accessories in 2004

Eastman Kodak Company has confirmed plans to discontinue the manufacture and sales of slide projection products and accessories in June of 2004. This early disclosure is being made to key user groups in order to allow time for adoption of a replacement technology or purchase of backup slide projector products.

The KODAK products included in this event are CAROUSEL, EKTAGRAPHIC, EKTALITE and EKTAPRO slide projectors and all KODAK Slide Projector accessories. The current plan is to cease manufacturing in June 2004. Kodak anticipates that small quantities of new Carousel, Ektagraphic, Ektalite and Ektapro slide projectors will be available through the end of 2004. In addition, the Kodak distributor, Comm-Tec, in Germany plans to sell Ektapro projectors and accessories beyond 2004. Kodak will offer service and support for slide projectors until 2011. Slide projectors continue to be used in many government applications due to a proven track record of cost-effective, reliable, high-quality image



projection. Combining the seven years of service and support with a long history of trouble-free operation, means that slide projectors will continue to enjoy many years of productive use. Investigating and installing replacement technologies can be a challenging and costly effort with a long implementation timeline. So, many may wish to purchase backup units for currently installed slide projectors while making the transition. Upcoming government budgeting activities make it prudent to pre-disclose now in order to allow ample time to include slide projector demand in the government budgeting plans for 2004.

Making Kodak aware of your future requirements will insure that there is enough products on hand before production ends. You can do this by contacting Glenn Prince, Kodak Account Manager, Government Markets (678) 339- 0723, glenn.prince@kodak.com .

Thank You, Glenn R. Prince, Eastman Kodak Company
Have a peaceful, joyous day.

ACTON FREE PRESS

7 December 1899

CREWSON'S CORNERS: James Ramshaw has been building a new paint shop in connection with his blacksmith shop. Three cars wrecked here on Thursday morning on GTR - furniture from Eatons reduced to kindling wood - sheep escaped without a scratch.

GEORGETOWN: Electric lighting for residences is growing more popular.

ACTON: Crescents Lacrosse team invite everyone to Town Hall Friday night for an "At Home". It will include Disons latest success the concertograph.

James Clark, miller of Acton has left to lease well-known Haynes Mill in Cheltenham. He was on municipal Council for two years.

The facade of the new leather warehouse being erected by Messrs Beardmore & Co. at the GTR station, presents quite an imposing ediface.

14 December, 1899

GEORGETOWN: A.G.H. Luxton has been honoured as President of Western Hockey League. Local president is E. B. Nicklin. Election of reeveship will probably be between Reeve Kennedy and Frank J. Barber.

ACTON: Mr. A. T. Brown, president and Dr. Forster, convenor of the Literary Committee, entertained members of the Epworth League Reading Circle in Matthews Hall last evening.

Tuesdays terrific gale blew down one of the electric lamps on Mill Street.

A meteor of exceptional brilliance crossed the heavens last Wednesday evening and was observed by many residents of this section.

21 December 1899

CREWSON'S CORNERS: Mr. Wm Bryers of Acton preached in the Methodist Church last Sabbath. Mr. Wansborough was honoured for his service as organist and choir leader for Methodist Church.

BALLINAFAD: Policeman Shortill of London is spending a couple of weeks at home. Come and see our large store since it is finished. Mr. Bett is a hustler. Mr. Graham, teacher will leave this week, replaced by Miss McKinnon of Hillsburg.

LIMEHOUSE: We take pleasure in complimenting Mr. McDermid on the way he decorated his store window for Christmas.

ACTON: Our Library has 171 members. The Commercial Hotel was thrown into confusion late Sunday evening when Miss Mabel Thompson, a maid, swallowed a large pin. Drs. Macdonald and Forster were called, but could not remove it. She was taken to Guelph General Hospital on a freight train, but on the operating table was seized by a violent coughing spell and brought it up.

A long series of Christmas entertainments will be inaugurated in the town hall this evening by St. Alban's Sunday School.

A smash up at Rockwood delayed the Tuesday evening trains two or three hours. Postmaster General Mulock was amongst passengers delayed at Acton. He was entertained to supper by landlord Clark at the Campbell House.

28 December 1899

CREWSON'S CORNERS: Many went to ball at Eden Mills on Christmas night.

BALLINAFAD: Hunters and dogs are out but report game rather scarce.

GEORGETOWN: Ministerial Association meeting held at home of Mr. Crawford on 18th.

GLEN WILLIAMS: A shooting match was held here Christmas afternoon.

STEWARTTOWN: Reeve Stewart entertained council to dinner at Hill's hotel on 15th.

ACTON: Meeting of Halton Farmers' Institute to be held at Town Hall on Monday 8th Jan.

Christmas tree entertainment to be given in brick Church this evening. Miss Clark will continue her classes in music at her home on Frederick Street.

Mystery and Intrigue with a Norval Connection

By Dawn Livingstone

The front page of the Georgetown Herald, 15 October 1964 reads: "One of this district's most distinguished native sons, John B.C. Watkins, died suddenly in Montreal on Monday. He collapsed from a heart attack while having dinner at the Holiday Inn." Now, nearly 40 years later, this story has been highly disputed in a new book, and in fact, a recent television docu/drama, last week, starring Christopher Plummer.

John Watkins had been born at Norval Station in 1902, he attended the local public school, took his high school education in Brampton, and attended University of Toronto. His parents farmed at Norval, although his father died when he was quite young. He had two sisters, and he maintained his Norval roots throughout his life.



Norval Station

EHS p10825

John was a brilliant man, with a gift for languages, which lead him to become at different times in his diplomatic career, the Canadian Ambassador to Norway, Denmark, and Russia. He was a personal friend of highly placed Canadian Parliamentarians including Prime Minister Lester Pearson.

The book, *Agent of Influence*, was published in 1999, written by Ian Adams. "The powerful drama is the true saga of how Canadian espionage agents interrogated Watkins during

marathon sessions in a Montreal hotel suite in October 1964, convinced the former Canadian ambassador to Moscow was a double agent for the Soviet Union." (Starweek Magazine, April 2003.) Watkins did suffer from heart problems, but they were extremely aggravated by his lock up and interrogation for several days at the hands of the CIA and RCMP. The fact that he died while under their care, was very carefully hidden for many years, until Ian Adams started to prod into the now public documents surrounding Watkins career.

There was never any positive proof that John Watkins was anything but an ambassador for his beloved Canada. He was well respected, and did have many friends overseas including Russia. By all reports, he was a very friendly and likeable man, and he did a great deal to soften and further the relationship between Canada and Russia during the Cold War. It is thought that his downfall was the fact was a homosexual, in a world which until 1968, regarded homosexuality as a crime.

The funeral service for John Watkins, the last surviving member of his immediate family, was held from Norval Presbyterian Church, where the Watkins family had been members, and where it is reported that John had played the organ (another of his personal accomplishments.) He is buried in Norval Cemetery.

Agent Of Influence, by Ian Adams, is a most interesting story of mystery, intrigue and suspense, in world political circles. In his own words, Adams says "I hope this book in some modest way begins to resurrect the spirit of a decent and honourable man who served his country well. I believe he deserved better, a lot better, than what he got."

Agent of Influence, a True Story, by Ian Adams, published 1999 by Stoddart Publishing Co Limited. ISBN 0-7737-3123-7, and very hard to find now.