

# REFLECTIONS

## OF Walkerton's Past

BY

### The Cordwainer

It was 1850 when Joseph Walker and the first settlers of Walkerton appeared on the scene, so it is interesting to note that it only took a little over ten years for the need for a newspaper to be met.

The press was introduced to Walkerton on February 23, 1861, when W. T. Cox established The Bruce Herald. The office was situated on the south side of Durham Street, in the middle of the old Post Office block, the stand now being occupied by Brown's Drug Store.

The founder of The Bruce Herald, however, only published the newspaper two years, for in 1863, he sold it to William Brown. The latter remained publisher of the paper for two decades, following which period it was purchased by Louis Kribs and William Wesley.

In March of 1884, one year later, it came under the sole ownership of William Wesley, who published The Bruce Herald until 1893, when he left to purchase the Ridgeway Standard. The late William Wesley

was the grandfather of the present publisher of the Walkerton Herald-Times.

During subsequent years and until 1912, The Bruce Herald was operated by William Telford, and afterwards by Len H. McNamara, who was its publisher for many years.

The Herald, in 1912, was amalgamated with The Bruce Times, the newly combined publication, The Bruce Herald and Times, being formed in February of that year, and published by William Wesley and Son. The newspaper's name was revised in 1928 to the Walkerton Herald-Times.

The Bruce Times had been established Sept. 28th, 1905, by William Wesley and his son, John Arthur Wesley, the plant then located in a business block of the old Rattan Factory on Durham Street, where the Skelton Apartment now stands. There it operated until 1908, when the plant and equipment were moved to the old American House, across the street. The two and a half storey stone

building, on the north side of Durham Street, has continued to be the home of the present newspaper.

In 1953, Harold Wesley, son of the late John Arthur "Arty" Wesley, became publisher and editor of The Walkerton Herald-Times, after having been closely associated with the business since 1933.

Between 1945, the year of Arthur Wesley's passing, and 1953, the publisher was his late widow, Edith Wesley, and the Wesley estate, with son Harold Wesley, the editor.

The second periodical to be established in Walkerton, came into being in December of 1869, eight years after the newspaper had first become an institution here, when The Walkerton Telescope was founded by D. W. Ross. The Telescope office was situated in the block until a few years ago occupied by Sparling's Meat Market on Jackson Street. Late in the last century, it was moved across the street to a building which stood on the site where Skip's Esso Service is now situated. Shortly after The Bruce Herald became part of The Bruce Times in 1912, The Telescope moved its plant to the Durham Street stand vacated by The Herald. Here it operated for 22 years, until 1934.

The Telescope, having been later disposed of by its founder, Mr. Ross, it was then conducted by Wallace Graham, Joseph Craig, D. C. Sullivan, T. H. Preston, J. B. Sheppard, A. Eby, J. B. Stephens, and A. W. Robb. The latter sold it to Lorne Eedy in 1916, who published the paper until 1924,

when it was taken over by Harry E. Pense. Conducting The Telescope for ten years, Mr. Pense sold The Telescope in 1934 to J. Arthur Wesley, and it was incorporated with The Walkerton Herald-Times.

During the height of the war in South Africa at the turn of the century, The Bruce Herald issued a small sheet each day, entitled Daily War News. Commencing on January 29th of 1900, this only attempt in the County to publish a daily paper, extended until May 7th of the same year, when news from the fighting front had lessened interest-wise.

Although over the period of the past one hundred and twenty years, four separate newspapers have been identified with Walkerton, at no time were they all published at once.

Die Glocke, a German language publication, was first issued in February of 1870, a couple of months after the founding of The Telescope. It was established by John Klein, who later sold it to A. Eby and John A. Rittinger. Subsequently Die Glocke was purchased outright by Mr. Rittinger, who continued to publish the paper until June, 1903, when the plant, after being in Walkerton over 32 years, was moved to Berlin, now Kitchener. Die Glocke eventually became a basis of the present Kitchener-Waterloo Record.

When referring to the press in Walkerton, mention should be made of the late Frank Eidt, who for several decades was first on the staff of the Walkerton Telescope until 1934, and then The Walkerton Herald-Times, up until his passing in 1963.

## Building Costs In 1900

By the year 1880, the population of Walkerton was about 2400, with about 792 of these being ratepayers. The assessed value of the town at that time was \$656,700.

A few years later, it was decided that Walkerton would become the County Town and the first costly and prominent buildings began to appear.

In 1886, the present stone jail and the original white brick Court House was built at a cost of \$43,000.00. The County Offices, the large building still in use, cost \$7,500.00, and the Registry Office was built for \$5,360.00.

By 1872, the settlers felt the

need for a Town Hall, and a site was chosen near the centre of town. The site was empty, because the foundry operated by James Blair had burned down in 1871. It was decided to build a frame hall 30' by 62' with a bell tower, and the cost of this was \$1,500.00 plus \$1,000.00 for the land.

Evidently this hall was not good enough for a County Town, because by 1897 it was replaced with the present Victoria Jubilee Hall.

Incidentally, the bell that still hangs in the tower of the Town Hall was bought in 1870 for \$275.00. It was first hung from a tall derrick on the Court

House grounds to be rung by the caretaker. In 1873 it was moved to the bell tower of the first Town Hall, and then transferred again in 1897 to its present elevation when our Town Hall was built.

Now, back to building costs. The total cost of the Bruce County Hospital was \$16,650.00, when it was built, just after the turn of the century. It opened in 1903. And is neighbouring edifice, the Bruce County House

of Refuge was built for a cost of \$16,440.00, plus the cost of the land. It opened in 1900.

After perusing these costs, it's no wonder the older generation is shocked by today's prices.