

CANADA'S FIRST DRIVE-IN THEATRE AT STONEY CREEK:

By Alan D. Ford
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Canada awakened to her first peace time spring in 6 years. She yawned blinked and then looked straight ahead to progress. The year was 1946, and one spring morning a small dapper man from Geneva, Ohio surveying the broad plush fields of Mr. Duncan's farm frontage on Number 8 Highway, near Grays Road. The happy effervescence of Saltfleet High School students on their lunch hour only added to the excitement that Doc Manley felt as he contemplated the site of what was to be the first Drive-In theatre in Canada.

The dozing fruit trees were all unaware that a brand new concept of entertainment, one that would cater to man's progress and his new found love the automobile was coming to fruition, and thereupon would topple those mammoth gilt palaces of moviedom entertainment of millions for almost a half a century.

Thus a page was turned and late July 1946 the Skyway Drive-In theatre was opened. The squawking new baby created quite a stir. Hundreds of cars plugged roads for miles around nightly. Farmers used to going to bed to the lowing of the wind, now were lulled to sleep by Bing Crosby or rudely awakened by the Battle of the Bulge. At first there were no individual speakers for the cars; huge exponential speakers hung from the towering screen and even the intimate whispering of love scenes were clearly audible on Ridge Road. This long hot summer also saw national awareness of Stoney Creek's Skyway when a Cabinet Minister, delayed in the early evening traffic, inquired and found he was in a line up to a drive in theatre and later brought it up on the floor of the legislature. Everyone enjoys the movies, but finally an entirely new sect of the Cinematograph Act had to be rewritten and with Stoney Creek's



drive-in as a precedent regulations were put into effect governing the construction and operation of Drive-In theatres in Ontario.

Harold Harrison, prominent musician and official of Local 303 I.A.T.S.E. Projectionists Union was selected to operate and maintain the expensive technical equipment of the projection department. Mr. Harrison brought in the entire membership of the Projectionists Union to rush the theatre to completion and since that opening day in 1946 he has continued the loyal, efficient operation of the heart-beat and the voice of the

Drive-In Theatre. Many stories and events down through the years can be recounted by Mr. Harrison. How one of the early ushers went on to become a star in his own galaxy, Bill Bewley, now with the Montreal Allouettes - the Sopinka boys from the valley of the creek - young Geigy whose father operated the Day and Night hotel and many others, like the Skyway, symbols of progress in their community.

Progress not to be denied, the following years saw renovations and improvements by the score and in 1958 another man of vision, Robert Myers then Famous Players Canadian Division Head added still another page to the scripture of mass entertainment. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were poured into the site and the drive-in emerged as Canada's most modern with a new face and brand new refreshment plaza, housing the comfortable washrooms, the projection suite and a modern cafeteria - type snack bar. The Skyway would now operate 52 weeks a year with warmth in winter supplied by Otto Bernz's new development, the In-Car Heaters.

TWEEDSIDE CEMETERY MUD ST. - SALTFLREET TWP.

The Crown Patent for 300 acres was made to the Hon. Robert Hamilton on the 14th of September 1803.

This cemetery has always been called Tweedside cemetery because of the location.

The church that is on the property was originally Wesleyan in denomination and was later changed to United Church.

Jeremiah Soules decided 1 acre of land to the Canadian Wesleyan New Connexion on the 2nd of October 1860. The original Trustees were: Abraham Neff, Thomas Lottridge and Henry Hannon, Barton yeomen also James Wiley and Simeon Althouse, Saltfleet yeomen. This was on Concession 6, part of lot 3.

The first person named on a monument in the cemetery is listed as Howland Soules who died December 29 1837. The original church, of Wesleyan denomination was built in 1874. it was part of a 6 point charge in the Ker / Tapleystown Circuit.

The new church was built in 1897 nearer to the road. the church owns .47 acres and the cemetery owns .35 acres. The later being in the hands of the Saltfleet Municipality and is maintained by them.

The church, now a part of the United Church of Canada is no longer active. It was transferred to a Board of Trustees in 1983 for disposal. This decision was made because of low attendance in the church and high maintenance cost resulting from vandalism.

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The sponsoring organization is the Ontario Genealogical Society, Hamilton Branch.