

...Nor In Their Stand On Politics

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By ARTHUR WILLIAMS

Ever since George Brown (better known as "Brown of the Globe") started to hustle votes for Sir Geo Hinks in the election of Jan. 1, 1848, the political life in West Zorra has been unique.

This was a crucial election for the Baldwin government. Sir Francis Hinks was second in command of the Reform Party and had carried the Oxford Riding in 1841 but failed in 1844. It was suggested that he try for election in a different riding but as he was out of the county at the time of nomination for the '48 election it was decided to have George Brown act on his behalf.

This was considered a good move on the part of Baldwin. Hinks had little influence on the Scots of Zorra, but Brown, who was the editor of "The Banner," (a stern Presbyterian paper which was the forerunner of the Globe) had ideas that were readily acceptable to the Scots of the Zorras. As a result of his hustling in the township, Hinks won by a majority of 384 votes in the riding.

Ten years later, George Brown accepted the nomination for the North Oxford Riding as well as a Toronto riding, both of which he carried. He retained the Toronto riding, and from that time on the Liberal party had little trouble in Zorra.

As they said Quebec voters were still voting for Laurier long after his death, so it was in Zorra that they still voted for George Brown. Even when D. M. Sutherland, in 1925, became the first Conservative to carry Oxford since Confederation, he failed to carry Zorra. His opponent had a majority of 491 votes. It was not until Wallace Nesbitt finally won the township for the Conservatives in 1957 that people could no longer say that George Brown swayed the vote of Zorra. For almost a century the loyal Scots remained true to this man—a fate no other township can claim and a real tribute to the Rock of Zorra.

Don't for one moment think

that Dominion elections were quiet affairs in Zorra. The candidates would often send conveyances of various kinds to bring in the voters. It would be a type of civic holiday with drinks for all. By the time the polls closed for the day there would have been many a hot argument and a few good fights.

As it was a verbal vote, one could tell how the other voted. It is reported that a father went to vote. Upon

arriving at the polling station the father voted and the son voted opposite. As a result of this the father made the son walk home barefooted.

After the ballots had been counted, a dip into the water-trough was usually the fate of any who lost their vote and remained for the count.

In local politics there was little need for party lines. On many occasions, though it was not unusual for a conservative supporter to become elected to the township council. It was the man that counted.

The first township council was elected in 1850. This also included Embro, which was not yet a village. The members elected included Donald Matheson, Angus Munro, Benson Pelton, J. M. Ross and Alex Clark. Donald Matheson was chosen as reeve.

One of the first motions passed by the council was to purchase a dozen taller candles to be used at council meetings.

The first by-law passed by the council was a by-law prohibiting sheep running at large. The meeting place for the council was at the Great Western Hotel at Youngsville due to its central location. The council continued to meet here until 1911, when they moved the meetings to Embro.

New Shops Opened In Embro As Trade Moved With Zorra

By 1860, rapid changes were taking place in West Zorra.

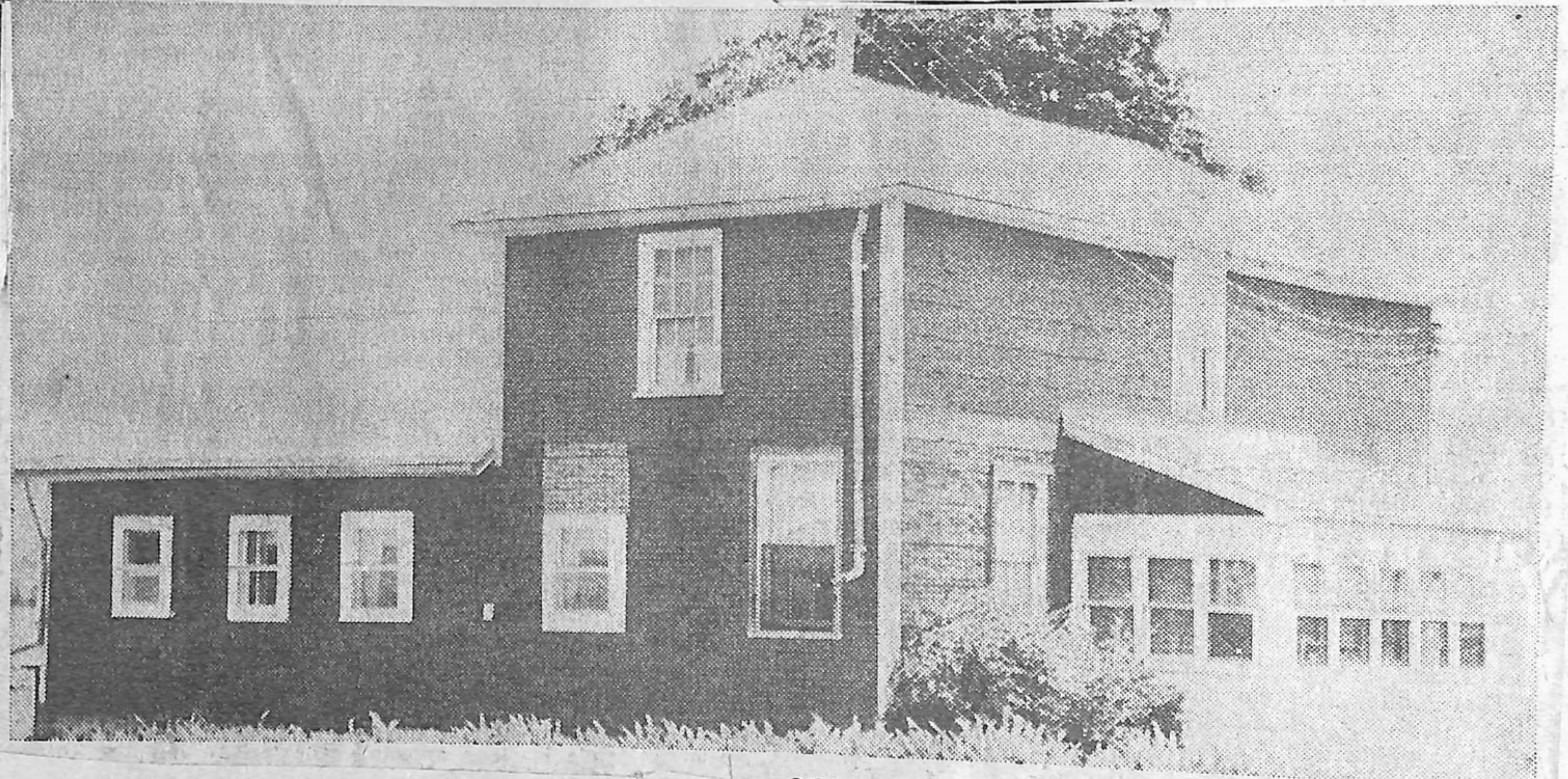
The forests were fast disappearing and brick, stone and frame homes replaced the old log cabins. In the township, there were 80 frame homes and 31 brick and stone.

In keeping with the progress made in the rural area, Embro as the local centre of trade and commerce, kept pace. Here were found many new business establishments opening. James Brewer operated a bakery; James Adams, a shoeshop and furniture showroom; Charles Brewer, a photography shop; William Geddes, Colin McDonald, John McKay, were wagon-makers; William Grant,

John McKay, James S. Munro, tailor shops; Daniel Loucks, millwright. There were also six blacksmiths, three hotels, nine general merchants. W. E. Sutherland was the undertaker and George Duncan, the village doctor.

Life in the Zorra was not all work and no play. During the winter of 1857-58, a great revival took place at Youngsville. The turnout was so great that it had to be transferred to the Temperance Hall at Embro.

In 1860, a company of volunteers organized in Embro and became known as the Embro and West Zorra Highland Rifle Co. It numbered 55 privates with Isaac Wallace as Captain, Neil Matheson, lieutenant, and Hugh Ross as ensign.



COUNCIL MET HERE — The council of West Zorra Township met in this building at Youngsville, until 1911, when headquarters were moved to Embro.