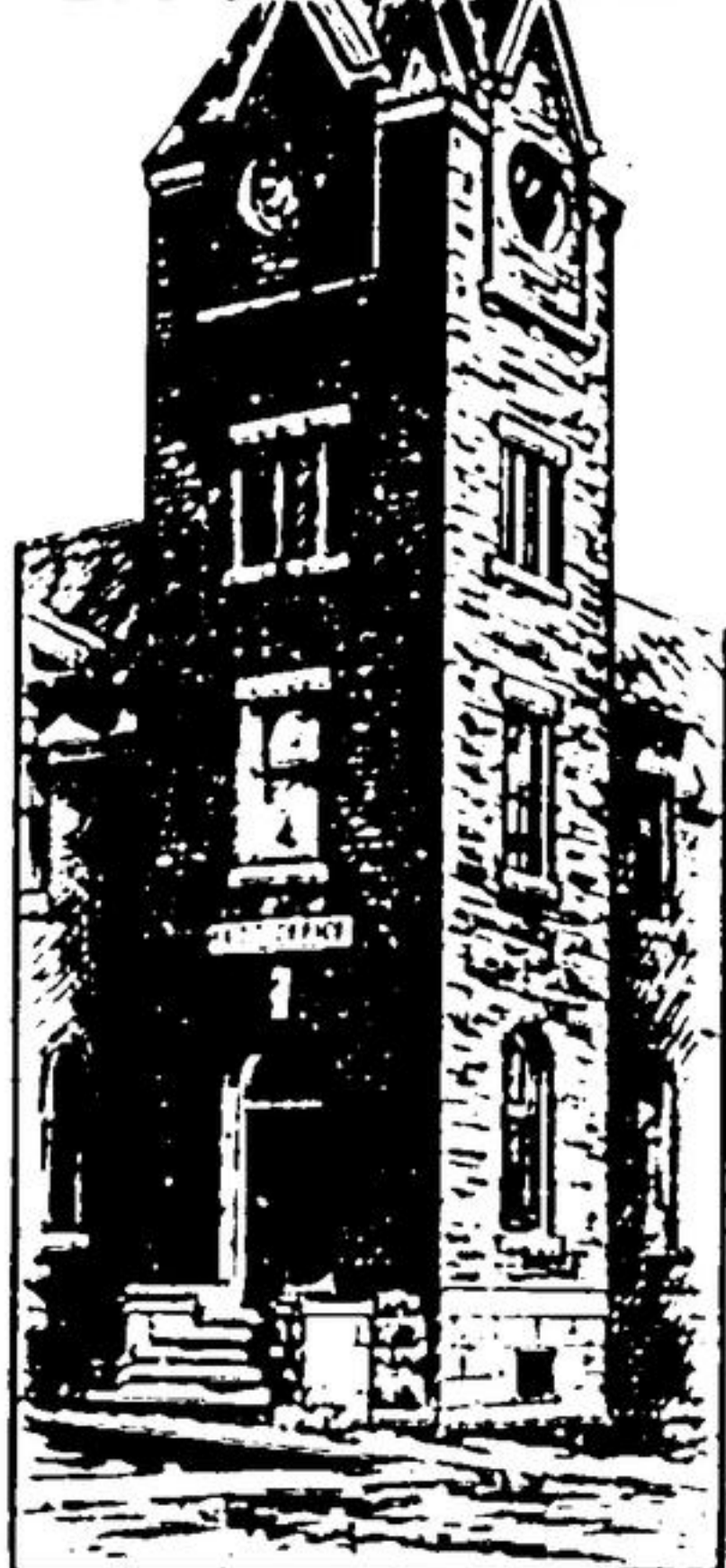


## THE OLD MAN OF THE BIG CLOCK TOWER



### 'Old Man' Column Published in Book

The column in the Free Press that has been published for over twenty years, "The Old Man of the Big Clock Tower," is now being published in book form. The column was first published in 1909 and has since then been a popular feature of the paper. The book, "The Old Man of the Big Clock Tower," is now published by the Free Press. The book contains all the articles that have appeared in the column since its inception. The book is a valuable addition to the history of Acton and is a must-read for anyone interested in the town's past. The book is available in book form and is a valuable addition to the history of Acton and is a must-read for anyone interested in the town's past.

#### FIRST OYSTERS

Oysters were first publicly served in Acton in the Oyster Parlour of George Stoddard. These parlours were in the house formerly owned by the late Mamie Massales and now owned by Neil Patrick.

### 'Red Coats' March Time, Fenian Raids

Bells Hall, which is now Acton Woodcraft, was the Armory for Company 6 of Haldon Battalion when it was organized in 1846 the year of the Fenian raids. The red coated soldiers marched off to the adjoining commons after the evening's drill to deposit their old bayonet, Enfields and equipment. When the troops were issued with a green uniform the old red ones were kept by the soldiers. One such youth gave me to an attractive girl in the village and when she appeared in it re-fashioned as a shawl it created a new style for the maidens of the village and red coats were at a premium. The Free Press was able to secure one of these old coats last year when Frank McIntosh gave us the item.

May 27 1877 A four dollar bill was lost on Mill Street last evening.



FIRST REEVE of Acton as a Village was W. H. Storey. He lived in "Sunderland Villa" which is now the Victor B. Rumley Funeral Home. This house was built for him and he died there 49 years of age after having contributed greatly to the progress of Acton.

### 'Hookey' Escapade Ends With Fatality

Alf Baird used to be taken to school with a leather strap in the hands of his mother. He didn't like school. The last day he spent in Acton, the last day he spent on earth, he played "hookey" from school. He played at the station, jumped freights and then with a turnip from a nearby field in each hand, Alf tried to jump on at the engineer's step. The turnips interfered with his hold and Alf fell under the wheels of the tender. Both legs were ground off and poor Alf was carried home on a shutter. He died about midnight. This was one of the saddest events in the history of Acton school and of Acton annals.

July 9 1875 - Shade trees are being torn up on Promenade Ave.

# ROMANTIC STORIES

### Growth Is Rapid Town out of Houses

The ten semi detached houses on Bower Avenue, once known as Association Terrace, were erected about sixty five years ago because Acton grew so rapidly they ran out of houses. To remedy the situation in some degree Acton Building Association was organized with Mr Storey as the president. William Firstbrook of Toronto was given the contract of building the ten houses, which were erected for about \$1000 each.

#### RACES HELD

Horse races were held on the popular straight-away course from the village to the fourth line. This course was maintained in condition for racing and wide enough for three or four horses abreast for many years.

### Beauty Contest Over Fine Gardens Has No Swim Suits

Mrs Secord, Sarah Augusta, as she was known, and Mrs Charlie Symon vied for honors in their garden. Mrs Secord's garden was on the corner of Mill and Main on the land now occupied by the Fisherman Block, Carrolls and the Old and Ends shop. It was then devoted to flowers, shrubs and fruit trees. Mrs Symon's garden was where Talbot's Hardware and the home of Mr. and Mrs John Kentner are now located.

Mrs Secord led the faculty of pathos from far and near rare plants and flowers. Her garden was a riot of bloom but she paid little attention to order or method in her planting. Mrs Symon on the other hand was precise in the arrangement and formation of her flower garden. Her flowers and shrubs consequently showed to much better advantage.

Then again Mrs Symon's garden was surrounded by a low picket fence and all who passed were welcome to look and enjoy the beauty of the place. Mrs Secord's garden was surrounded by a high tight board fence. It is true that Fred, her son, sawed peckholes through this fence so that people passing might enjoy the flowers and shrubs.

### Price For a Kiss Now or Never, Percy

One time Mrs Secord went over to Mike Spiggle's when the children had the measles and offered the child of them a penny if she'd kiss Percy. She wanted Percy to catch the measles and get it over with when the other children were having them. We have no record of whether the contract was sealed and delivered right there or not.

### Once Farm Lane Now Bower Ave.

Bower Avenue was originally the farm lane to the back of the old Adam farm. West Bower was the Great Farm from the house to the end and here as it was in those early days. It commenced at the farm residence just in the rear of where Knox Mar's now stands and ran to a point on Main Street opposite the present Knox Church building.

### Full Steam Ahead House on Tracks

After standing idle for a number of years the railway people offered for sale the house built next to the Grand Trunk property and the Grand Trunk Railway pumping house of about 75 or 80 years ago.

Mr Laird bought the vacant lot on Young Street and the house. He put in a foundation on the Young Street property and let a contract to Ed Dynes to move the house to that property.

Things went well at first and in record time the house was rolled down on the tracks to the Mill Street crossing. It reached the crossing about noon and was ready to be turned to the street. Mr H S Holmes who was agent of the road here went to Ed and told him he'd better go and get the building off the tracks and not stop for dinner or he might hold up the 220 passenger train.

Ed and his men ate though and hustled back. But as they were turning the house to and behold it stuck on the rails. They jerked and they pulled, but the building would not budge. It came 2 o'clock and that found Ed in a sweat. Harry Holmes in a fury and Sam Laird in despair. It came 2:20 and along came the passenger train and Ed and his house were still on the main line of the tracks. The train men were wrothy, the dispatcher blazed his orders over the wires and things were hot all round. But the train men got to work with Ed Dynes and an extra team or two of horses were hitched on and at last the old house slid off the tracks and on to Mill Street around 3 o'clock.

### Guelph Fights Fire Local Brigade Wins

On April 17 1879 fire broke out in the pile of cordwood south of Church Street. It was one of the piles located in town of 2000-3000 cord of hardwood for the use of the Grand Trunk engines. The immense conflagration threatened the whole town. Guelph's fire brigade was called for and came down on a special train with a hand fire engine. Guelph was celebrating its inauguration as a city and Mayor Chase was acting Fire Chief. The Chief and his men had been celebrating all day and naturally on those days were hardly in condition for effective fire fighting. Acton Bucket Brigade mistook the fire after 500 cords of wood had been destroyed. The complete loss was \$1000 and there was no insurance on it.



FIRE FIGHTING was quite a job in the days of this steam engine. Hauling this engine was usually done by the men because of the late arrival of the horses. The hose reels, and the hook and ladder wagon also had to be hauled to the scene by the citizenry. Its last big fire was the Beardmore tannery in 1924.