

The only paper ever published in Acton



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Little and Big Things

Many items go to make a community like Acton a good place to live. Some of them are big items and others are small.

We've watched for years many of our citizens finding a place to rest on the steps at the Post Office. The steps often become a little crowded and hinder traffic too.

Forgotten Island

It would appear that Acton is to be a forgotten island of the Bell Telephone for a while at least.

The Bell has been rapidly installing dial equipment all around the town but Acton still has its present system.

We have no doubt that the Bell has a long range plan for Acton as it must in its continuing development but it seems strange that our neighbors, including Rockwood, Campbellville, Georgetown, Milton, and Brampton have the service with no announced date for installing the service in Acton.

Obviously Acton's telephone system only covers a small area, really too small for the good of the town, but it would indeed be encouraging to hear of some plans for installing the modern dial equipment in Acton with its resulting advantages of direct dialing.

Let our comments be misinterpreted however, let us point out that the operators in the Acton office are doing quite well with the existing facilities. The installation of dial would obviously increase the problems for fire and police calls.

It would seem in keeping with the progress of the town that dial phones should see early installation here.

A Suggestion Box?

The "suggestion box" is a pretty well established institution in most major enterprises in Canada. For more and more employees every year it's proving to be financially advantageous too.

One only has to talk with any group in almost any municipality to be faced with a remark that "if they'd only..." So why not a municipal suggestion box prominently located to gather the thoughts that could indeed lead to a better municipality.

Those with ideas for improving efficiency and cutting costs would be urged to put them on a piece of paper, sign it, and drop it in the box.

Inevitably there would be wags, wits and half wits with suggestions of "drop dead" and the "get lost" variety (unsigned) but these would gradually decline.

In contrast there might be some more serious suggestions with obvious merit, that could be tried out. And even the simplest and most trivial would not be futile if it resulted in some saving or improvement.

The town covers a fairly large area and there's no doubt that representations to the various public groups are desirable in many cases where improvement is felt imperative. But if everyone was thinking about the whole town looking for ways in which costs of operation might be reduced or improvements made, the town would be better for having that interest.

We don't say a simple suggestion box could achieve all that but at least it could be an answer to those who comment "if the town would only..."

April and Tax Time

April is a month of tax compilations and as governments at various levels take on more and more of social services and other functions we can look for more and more tax levies for these other services.

This past week or so local municipalities have been struggling with mill rates. Perusing other newspapers we find a wide variety of mill rates. As it stands at present these rates do not tell the story of high or low taxes paid by the individuals in any town.

For some years Ontario has been endeavoring to obtain a system whereby assessment values will be measured by the same yardstick in every municipality. Some progress has been made toward this end but it is far from finished as witnessed only last week when a new manual was adopted for Halton. It will follow for other counties eventually but just when it will be completed is indeed difficult to predict.

The important point to consider is whether you get good value for the amount you are called upon to contribute each year. Some towns have complete services such as waterworks, sewage disposal, garbage collection, paved streets, adequate schools, good fire protection, good insurance rates, snow removal and so forth. Other places have very mediocre municipal services and consequently lower taxes. You get just what you pay for. No tax levying body has any special source of money raising except by taxes of some sort from all the people.

It is somewhat mystifying to the uninitiated perhaps to note on municipal tax bills that your tax bill has been lowered by certain grants from the Ontario government. It is not mentioned that the moneys for these grants are obtained from tax levies made on citizens of the province. The only folks who pay taxes are the citizens of the country. Santa Claus has no magic pack in the matter of fund raising for public service other than tax levies.

End Train Rammers

Periodically, newspaper editorials campaign for "elimination" of railway crossings, and the expenditure of more money for underpasses and overpasses. Ontario alone has 7,926 grade crossings, and grade separations are costly — \$800,000 in Metropolitan Toronto down to perhaps a quarter as much in areas where property damages are negligible.

There is, however, one way of accomplishing to a great extent the same result as grade separation, and without spending a dollar. Of the casualties at railway crossings, a formidable proportion fall under a category described in Transport Board publications as "automobile ran into side of train." It reduces the number of casualties, it is necessary only for motorists to stop ramming trains.

Perhaps some readers do not know how prevalent this type of "accident" is. The report, for last November, 1957, shows 36 level crossing accidents in Ontario, in six of which motor vehicles rammed trains. Manitoba's score was 50 per cent, so was Saskatchewan's. Alberta had five "ran into side of train" in a total of 14 crossing accidents. In September last year there were 23 Ontario crossing accidents, five of them due to train-rammers. That month's statistics were embellished by the item "Pedestrian walked into side of train."

It must take a bit of doing for drivers to hit a train smack on the side. To be too early means getting into the commoner class of "struck by train," and if too late the driver misses the target.

The railway companies find no humor in it. They sue for damages to their rolling stock, where feasible, and recover substantial sums. The CBR not long ago was awarded \$15,376 against a truck driver.

Crossing accidents are nearly always costly to life and limb. Many fatalities and personal injuries would be avoided if drivers would lay off train ramming.

Not that 100 per cent reform can be expected. Traffic engineers of the Ontario Department of Highways, completing last year a survey of car-train smashes, reported: "There is a certain amount of evidence to indicate that some of the fatalities can be considered suicide. There seems to be no other way of explaining the case of the man who suddenly draws out of a line of traffic waiting for a train to pass and drives headlong into a boxcar."—The Printed Word.

Brief Comment

One observation strictly in the realm of the future is that three or possibly four satellites orbiting around the earth could relay radio and television programs from any part of the globe to any other part. This would indeed be a boost to Bonnyville as people here could at least enjoy television reception just as well as their city cousins. Bonnyville (Alta.) Tribune.



"Kitten Cuties"

G. A. D. About

Fire Equipment Through the Years

I've been almost overwhelmed in recent weeks with the good words and kindness that has been showered upon me, not only in the weekly newspaper field, but here in Acton, where I have spent most of my lifetime. Words fall me in replying, either at the functions in any other way.

Life has many wonderful rewarding compensations which are not recorded in dollars and cents valuations. It has been said that a friend is one who knows all about you and likes you just the same. My recognition has come from my friends, which makes all the rewards have double value. May I, at the risk of being repetitions, again say a heartfelt thank you all.

Biggest newspaper to reach my desk in some time was the 11-section 216-page issue of the St. Peterburg Times from Florida. Of course, it came from ex-Lieutenant Harrison, perhaps in an effort to urge us on to bigger achievements for the Free Press. It sold for 25 cents a copy or by mail at 35c or three for \$1.00 and was printed in a wide variety of colors. Perhaps we'll aim for something mammoth on Acton's Centennial in 1973.

I strolled around on Saturday afternoon last to visit the open house of Acton Fire Brigade and visit for the first time the new fire hall and see present day equipment. It's a nice thing to have open for public inspection once in a while. The services which go to make our town and district and Saturday's event was most commendable. It's a set-up of which we all may be proud — not only Actonians, but the whole district which it serves. It brought back memories of earlier years and the fire fighting equipment. The collection of souvenirs in the hall recalled memories with which I was familiar. There were badges from firemen's demonstrations and some that recalled firemen's excursions to

Niagara Falls and gala days in the park on the first of July.

A fireman's excursion, of course, was a community affair which everyone could attend if you had the necessary train fare which was I think about a dollar or so. I was then an apprentice at the Free Press under a limited salary scale. The affair came in mid-week and to get off, I and my companion John Moore, worked until five o'clock in the morning to finish our portion toward getting out the paper on time, had breakfast and were back for the excursion train before nine o'clock. Like all excursions of those days, the train was a special and was late getting away. We arrived at the falls before dinner time.

I had the day there swimming about and excited the boys who were camping with the 20th Regiment Lorne Rifles under Capt. Charlie Gamble. We got back in Acton sometime after midnight because all the street lights were out and it was a dark, dark night to find your way home with no light to guide you.

But what I recall most vividly was the old steam fire engine and the equipment of other days, compared to the three trucks now required to give Acton and district fire protection. Let's see, two was the engine, a coal cart, two big hose reels and the back and ladder wagon. They were all equipped to be hauled to the fires by hand.

The engine could be drawn by horses too, but usually we didn't wait for the horses to arrive but everyone got on a long rope and drew the engine to the proper source of water. There were boxes in the creek on Main Street north and south and a cistern north of the tracks, which was kept full. Two cisterns piped from Henderson's pond gave a supply at the Town Hall and at Mill and Frederick Sts. Over the railway tracks on

Young St., a tank underground got a supply from the G.T.R. railway tank which was kept to supply water for the railway engines. At the other end of town Fairy Lake gave a big supply.

By the time the engine was at the water source and the hose was laid there was steam up in the engine and Henry Gridell would bust the whistle and we boys would run along the hose as it filled with water to fight the fire. Of course, there was also the bucket brigade which was ready to go into action as soon as it arrived. The equipment gave good service for many years until the motor car age and the advent of waterworks. The equipment had a big place in every parade and it shone in all its glory.

It must have been about 1920 when a Ford fire truck which had served Mount Dennis was brought in to fight fires. By that time, fire hydrants were around town and the pressure was boosted by pumps up at the Main Street pumping station. Second fire truck was a pumper truck which had seen service at Southbury. It's still in service as an auxiliary or stand-by. The Ford was dismantled and used as a utility car by the municipal office.

About five or six years ago, a brand new truck was brought into service in Acton and now it, along with a fire area truck, is housed in the new fire hall which was completed this year and modernized equipment throughout.

Maybe some of you will remember the fire alarm bell used before warning sirens became the vogue to summon the brigade to the fires. It was attached to the town hall bell and was hand operated. It was quite a knack to ring it properly and residents who lived near the Town Hall usually were called upon to operate the fire alarm.

Big fires I recall in which the old steam engine operated very effectively were the saw mill blaze on Main Street, and two conflagrations of the hotel that used to stand at the corner of Mill and Main Streets. I think the last time the old steamer was pressed into service was at the big Beardmore tannery fire in 1924.

At that fire we had our waterworks system, the Beardmore plant's own equipment and the brigades from Milton and Georgetown. All of the connections were different and the firemen were greatly handicapped in working together. Now all fire equipment in Halton County at least is of one standard and acceptable in any section.

We've come a long way in the past 30 years in controlling fire but still the loss is heavy throughout the county and we need to be constantly alert to keep it under control.

Farmer's Cheque Snack for Steer

SASKATOON (CP) — Farmer Martin Loewen had just collected his mail when he laid it down as he stopped to dig a waterhole on his way back to the farmhouse. When he turned around, a placid steer was finishing the last of three letters and a cheque.

BACK IN 1938

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, April 22, 1938.

The Acton Y badminton club journeyed to Orangeville last night where a return visit was paid to the club of that town. Nine players made the trip and enjoyed the outing. Acton came home the victors with a score of 2-3 in games.

Ex-Warden A. Mason was re-elected president of Halton - Peel Children's Aid Society at the third annual meeting held in the Sunday School room of St. Paul's United church in Milton.

Announcement was made this week of the sale of Johnson's Dairy business in Acton, Rockwood and Elm to Messrs. R. P. Watson and Robert Winton. This will combine the Watson and Johnson business under the new management.

At a meeting in the Dominion Hotel on Monday evening, a Lancers club was organized and an effort will be made to popularize this sport that has not been active here for 30 years or more.

New sound equipment has been installed at the theatre in Acton by proprietor L. Gregory. It incorporates all the features for the most famous reproduction of all the latest type recordings.

The change from standard to daylight saving time was scarcely noticed.

The 26th annual meeting of the Ontario Provincial Society of W.M.S. of the Presbyterian Church in Canada was held this week in Galt. Attending were Mrs. H. L. Bennie, Mrs. R. M. MacDonald and Mrs. H. Mainprize representing the Guelph Presbyterian, Mrs. F. S. Blow, Miss E. Cole and Miss M. Near from the local auxiliary.

The closing meeting of the Dublin Literary Society was held in the school on Tuesday evening, April 19. The main feature of the evening was a eulogy. Following the main part of the program, lunch was served and the balance of the evening spent in dancing.

Born Walters, in Acton on Saturday, April 23, 1938, to Mr. and Mrs. Louie E. Walters, a son, Debra Owen.

The old barn formerly belonging to the Dominion Hotel and in the rear of the building on Main Street, has been sold by Ross Swackhamer of Toronto to George Watson. He will use the material to replace the barn on his farm destroyed recently by fire.

BACK IN 1908

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, April 22, 1908.

J. Dickson, an Acton man, is trying to interest men of money in a new railway scheme. He wants to start a new summer park at Georgetown, and to build electric railways from both Burlington and west Toronto to Georgetown.

A dead horse was buried in the park the other day without permission. Chairman Spaight says if any dead animals are buried there hereafter, the offenders will be prosecuted.

A number of persons on the "Indian List" in town seem to have no trouble in getting supplies of liquor. Some of these persons are laying themselves open to legal proceedings.

Mr. H. H. Warden's Irish water spaniel "Barney" swept all the leading prizes in his class at the dog show in Toronto last week.

The case against Alfred McAninh for assault came up for hearing before His Honor Judge Graham at the County Court House in Milton yesterday afternoon. As there was no sufficient evidence, the case was dismissed.

The meeting of the Women's Missionary Auxiliary in the Methodist school room last Thursday afternoon was full of interest to the ladies interested in Missions. Mrs. C. C. Speight, president of the Auxiliary, presided. Miss Bertie Smith sang very sweetly "Sweetest Ever Moment" during the program.

It has been reported Captain C. E. Kinmull, commander of his majestic battleship Dominion, is to be appointed commander of the Canadian Navy. He is a son-in-law of Mrs. Walter Beardmore.

Street Commissioner Carnahan has been taking the boulevards this week. He will put on the road machine and scrape off the mud after the next rain storm.

On Saturday morning a hurry-up order came to a certain home in town for the removal of a couple of tons of coal from one side of a certain woodshed to the other. The father was laid up with a serious attack of muscular rheumatism and was unable to work at all.

Master John, a lad of about 12 years, spoke, up and said, "I think I could do that work, father." He went to work and moved the 2,000 pounds of coal in three hours and a half to the entire satisfaction of the person who gave the order.

PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY AND TRAVELLERS' GUIDE. Includes listings for Medical, Miscellaneous, Real Estate and Insurance, Dental, Legal, and Canadian National Railways.

THIS SUNDAY'S CHURCH CALENDAR. Lists services for The Anglican Church of Canada, United Church of Canada, Baptist Church Acton, Acton Pentecostal Tabernacle, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Knox Church Acton, and Wesleyan Methodist Church.