

Georgetown Archeologist Would Give Indian Artifacts Collection to County Museum

The Acton Free Press, Thursday, September 1st, 1960 9

EDITOR'S NOTE: Purpose of this series of articles will be to trace some of the interesting history that could well form the foundation of a Halton County museum where the history of Ontario's fastest-growing county may be properly displayed, described and shown to countless local and outside visitors.

By Roy Downs

Nestling in the heart of Ontario's "golden horse-shoe" lies the busy, bustling County called Halton. It includes eight thriving municipalities, five towns ranging in population from 4,000 to 40,000, numerous quaint old villages and new row-on-row subdivisions, a portion of the Niagara Escarpment the residents call "the mountain", two fine large creeks pouring water from the headlands into the lake, homes, business and commerce, industries and farmlands.

It's a picturesque county with centuries of interesting history now covered over by millions of dollars worth of development, yet here and there—untouched by the growth of a nation—we find rare places of unspoiled nature where searchers may find the peace and solitude which contrast so with our everyday life.

Halton's progress over the past 50 years, and especially the past 10, has been fast and furious. Hardly a detail has been missed as this once-agricultural community thrives and booms, and makes a name for itself from coast to coast.

No Suitable Museum

Yet one detail has been missed. One very important part of our living—past and present—has been left out of the wonderful picture of Halton. For the County is without a suitable museum to tell the people of tomorrow about the people of yesterday, and their struggle which laid the groundwork for today's prosperous boom of civilization.

There are, at Oakville and Burlington, museums of sorts which tell of the early days in those areas. But what of the rest of the county? Is an unkept four-by-six glass case, covered in dust and hiding

in the lobby of the Milton Court House, sufficient to fill in the details of a wonderful story no-one seems capable of telling?

Or could there be a movement begun immediately—even today—to establish a complete museum of Halton history?

And there could be, according to a young man who lives in Georgetown.

Willing to Donate

John Michie is a man who has spent the spare time of the last 20 years of his life developing the most interesting presentation of the early Indian life in this part of the country. He is willing to donate this slice of his life to a county museum.

John's collection of rare Indian artifacts . . . his writings about the Indian times before the white man invaded Halton . . . and his uncanny knack for presenting this story to a listener are treasures awaiting the establishment of this necessary facet of our heritage.

But who could start a museum? County council? Conservation Authority? Women's Institutes? An unformed (as yet) historical society? This is a question yet to be answered. Let us suffice to say action is needed, and now.

John's collection of Indian artifacts which he personally dug up from ruins of Indian villages right here in Halton County are a priceless start to the museum. Add to this the many dormant antique collections that lie in basements, attics, garages and storerooms across the county, and the few articles now on display commercially and privately here and there on the map, and a museum is born!

History Pieced Together

According to John Michie, learning the history of Halton through the 400's isn't easy. During that period, Jesuit missionaries from France lived with the Indians in this area and made monthly reports which were sent to Montreal whenever a runner was going that way. They sat in Montreal until a boat was going to France, and it sometimes took two years from the time of writing for the reports to reach France.

These writings were recently purchased by McGill University and brought to Canada where they were translated and the history of this country's early days was pieced together.

The writings are sketchy but correct, as the Jesuits wrote only what they saw.

It was not until 1901 that Canadian archaeologists began yearbooks on their findings. And so, with much reading and a lot of supposition and fitting together of the little pieces, John is now fairly well informed of the 17th century of the area.

Here, then, is his idea of the county's early days. It is believed that the Jesuits might have stood on the Niagara Escarpment here in the year 1621. They tell of standing on a mountain and looking toward the large body of water presumed to be Lake Ontario.

Champlain Here?

It is even possible that the great explorer Samuel Champlain might once have passed through Halton. The Huron tribes, located north of Orillia to Midland, reportedly held Champlain as hostage one winter. The route of his flight south to the United States and his return trip back are not definite, but he may have passed this way.

In 1627, a Jesuit missionary wrote of a neutral branch of the Iroquois tribe living in this district, under a chief named Saurohissen. He was the leader over 28 villages and did war with many tribes. John says he is supposed to have waged war with 17 nations of Indians, but finds it hard to believe.

After 1627, another Jesuit listed 23 towns between Toronto and Guelph, but this appears to be all the available history of the local district.

John himself has found 14 camps in a five mile radius right here in Halton. Location, of course, is not being made public to keep the "relic-hunters" away. These people, according to John, are not true archaeologists but go rushing into a buried camp, dig here and there, unearth some treasures and leave a mess behind them.

Guns Change Life

The Indians in this area were supposedly friendly to the English. Along the shores of Lake Ontario were the Mississaugas who were primarily fishermen and very quiet tribes. Along the north shore of Lake Erie were the neutral Indians who produced the flint in quarries and traded with other tribes for many miles around.

Things remained fairly peaceful and quiet until the English, Dutch and French arrived with guns. Then in 50 years the Indian developed from the stone age man using stone weapons, to the modern

Indian using metal, copper and iron. The rapid changeover to other methods of living disrupted his way of life and destroyed the balance of his household.

They could live easily by just hunting, while the women still worked hard. They became degenerate, indolent, looking further afield for something to make life interesting.

In 1649, 16,000 Iroquois of the Five Nations district south of Lakes Ontario and Erie, became weakened by smallpox and other European diseases. On December 7, they attacked the Hurons at St. Jean (near Collingwood) and destroyed it. They spent the remainder of the winter with the neutrals of this district, then in early spring led their attack on the north again and wiped out most of the Petuns.

Join Local Bands

Some of the Hurons who had escaped the winter slaughter pushed south and joined with the neutrals of this area. When the Iroquois returned to the southern section of Ontario to wipe out every tribe, the Petun survivors from the north joined the local bands and fled south to the Straits of Michilimackinac.

From here on, the fate of those Indians who inhabited Halton is sketchy because they split up and travelled far and wide. Some headed for Green Bay, Wisconsin and a Jesuit Mission was set up there. Some, in 1653, joined a band of Algonquians and wintered south of Sault Ste. Marie. A fugitive band of neutrals made an alliance with the Ottawas and went up the same route.

The Petuns and Ottawas arrived near Bayfield, Wisconsin, and organized an expedition against their Sioux neighbours. But the Sioux country was full of lakes and marshes and when 3,000 Sioux surrounded the invaders, only one man escaped.

Those who stayed behind on the raid returned to the Isle of Mackinaw, moved to the mainland and built a fort and village from which explorers Marquette and Joliette set out to discover the Mississippi.

Eventually, all these Indians became known as Wyandottes and ended up in Kansas. In 1761 some Petuns joined an alliance and in 1842 all surviving Petuns were rounded up and settled in Kansas reservations.

Burned in Mid-1600s

Where the local neutral Indians ended up, is hard to say. All that remained of their early days here in Halton are the burned-out village sites destroyed by the ravaging Iroquois. One camp found by this local archaeologist was attacked and burned in 1649 or 1650, he said.

Following the mass slayings, the Mississaugas, unscathed by the invasion, moved into this district and took over the empty land. It was sold to the Crown in 1784.

(It seems ironic, when you look back on it now, to realize that it was the English guns given to the Iroquois in the United States which caused the slaughter of the early possessors of the land on which we now live and fly the flag of our mother country, England.)

Our local Indians were mainly agricultural types—growing corn, squash, natural fruits and fishing and hunting to stay alive. They used the Lake Erie flint for arrowheads, knives, scrapers, drills and spearheads, and their trading between tribes developed many of the roads we drive along today. They even traded shells and wampum from the East Coast and traded shells with the Petuns and Hurons to the north in exchange for tobacco. These bands also traded shells, tobacco and corn to the Algonquians for medicine bags and health potions.

We Follow the Trend

Their contributions to modern civilization still stand out today. There is the corn, and the roads. Our system of government is based on the principle of the Iroquois confederation which was set up in the 1500's 300 years ago. Our women as were theirs are free and equal in social life.

The Indians were the first to use trench warfare and scout methods. They founded the Thanksgiving custom which was first mentioned in 1643. And the tobacco harvested by the Petuns in those early days is now being grown all over the continent.

As for the finer things in life, the Indian was highly cultured. Their ideas and feelings went into their beautiful pottery, their basket weaving, and their ornate pipes.

We owe much to their early men of Canada. Yet how, here in Halton, do we honor them? (to be continued next week)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Abuse From Caretaker, Thefts Disgust Visitor to Acton Park

Toronto, Ontario

Dear Sir,

After spending a few days in your fair town, I should like to tell you of our unfortunate experiences there. We visited the places of interest and spent three consecutive afternoons in your lovely little park.

The first day, however, our teenage son had a dollar stolen from his trouser pocket, even though the clothes were in full view on the banks of the lagoon. The second afternoon, we took a picnic lunch and left it, covered with a cloth, on a green picnic table. We were only a short distance away, looking through the wire fence at the children in the swimming pool. When we returned to prepare lunch, a full package of cookies had been stolen.

Third Visit

On the third afternoon, we again visited the park to let the little ones have fun in your pool. But there is no bench close enough to the pool to watch the children. I know the pool is well supervised but most parents, like us, enjoy the antics of the children.

So, we picked up a bench and proceeded to carry it over to the wire fence. Due to our previous experience, we felt we needed to supervise our lunch and the older boy's clothes.

Immediately the custodian (caretaker) blasted us in most objectionable and offensive language and told us to leave the children in the swimming pool. . . . bench under the tree. The previous evening the benches had been hauled clear across the park to watch the ball game.

Make Suggestion

Our suggestion is, and this is offered only as constructive criticism, that your custodian learn some manners, that your police occasionally patrol the park and that your parks department provide several portable benches that can be used by the pool fence.

Last summer we travelled 5,000 miles through the United States and Western Canada and never once did we encounter a situation quite like this, and never were we spoken to in such an obnoxious manner. On the contrary, we found the parks and playground area custodians most courteous and kind.

Yours sincerely,
Browned Off on Acton.

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ATTENTION
RURAL STUDENTS ATTENDING THE
ACTON DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER, 1960

THE BUS SCHEDULE WILL BE

No. 1 Bus Route East from Acton

Leave Acton 7.45 a.m.
Arrive Limehouse 7.55 a.m.
Arrive Bellmarket 8.00 a.m.
Arrive Acton at 8.15 a.m.

No. 2 Bus Route West from Acton

Leave Acton at 7.45 a.m.
Arrive 6th Line - No. 7 Highway 7.50 a.m.
Arrive 4th Line - No. 7 Highway 8.00 a.m.
Arrive Eden Mills 8.05 a.m.
Arrive Spynside 8.35 a.m.
Arrive Acton at 8.45 a.m.

No. 3 Bus Route South from Acton

Leave Acton at 8.20 a.m.
Arrive Spynside 8.30 a.m.
Arrive Acton at 8.45 a.m.

TIMES APPROXIMATE: Students Please be Ready a Few Minutes Before Schedule Time.

W. MIDDLETON,
Secretary-Treasurer.

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THIS SUNDAY'S Church Calendar

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Acton, Ontario
Rev. Dwight Engel, B.A.
Minister
Mr. George Elliott
Organist and Choir Master

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th, 1960

Services in the Y.M.C.A.
9.00 a.m.—Morning Worship.
11.15 a.m.—Morning Worship.
Sermon title, "The Sweating Sins"

Children under 5 years cared for in the nursery.

Announcement: Congregational meeting, Tuesday, September 6, 8 p.m.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

KNOX CHURCH, ACTON

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th, 1960

9.45 a.m.—Church School.
11.00 a.m.—Morning Worship.
Junior congregation (3-7) meets during sermon.

THE CHURCH OF ST. ALBAN

THE MARTYR ANGLICAN

Rector: The Rev. H. B. Stokreef, L.Th., S.T.B.
185 Jeffrey St., phone 365.

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th, 1960

8.30 a.m.—Holy Eucharist.
9.30 a.m.—Holy Eucharist.
11.00 a.m.—Choral Eucharist.
The Church School will resume its sessions next week, Sunday, 11 September at 9:30 a.m.
All Are Welcome!

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Rev. J. Nulms, B.A., B.D., Minister
301 Queen St. Box 46, Phone 698

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th, 1960

10.00 a.m.—English.
2.30 p.m.—Dutch.
The Church of the Back to God Hour

ACTON PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE

33 Churchill Road
P.A.O.C.
Rev. Kenneth J. Reid, Pastor
75 Cook St., phone 640-W

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th, 1960

10.00 a.m.—Sunday School.
11.00 a.m.—Morning Worship.
7.00 p.m.—Evangelistic

Tuesday, 8 p.m.—Prayer and Bible Study.

Thursday, 8 p.m.—Christ Ambassadors.
You Are Always Welcome

BAPTIST CHURCH ACTON

Pastor: James M. Rudd
39 Nelson Court, Phone 206

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th, 1960

11.00 a.m.—The Creation Story.
7.00 p.m.—John, Beloved of the Lord

All Are Welcome

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