

# The Acton Free Press

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GEORGE ARLOF DILLS

1893 - 1966

The death last Thursday of George Arlof Dills in his 73rd year, publisher of The Acton Free Press and The Canadian Champion, Milton, ended a life of rich service to his community and to his profession.

In 1958 The Acton Chamber of Commerce had named him the town's first Citizen of the Year. That same year he was honored by members of his profession when The Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association named him an Honorary Life Member and the provincial association named him Mr. Weekly Newspaperman of the Year.

A life-long resident of Acton, where he obtained his education, he was always its proud defender and public champion while he pressed for its progress directly in the field of community service as well as from the editorial chair of its paper. He was not silent on provincial and national topics, either, and his editorial writings were frequently quoted.

Mr. Dills apprenticed in the printing trade under the late H. P. Moore in 1909 and later sought a breadth of practical experience in Toronto, Guelph, Kingston and New York State.

In 1917 he returned to Acton and the Acton Free Press where he installed the county's first linotype machine to reduce the laborious hand setting of type. In 1918 he married Isma Macpherson and the following year became a partner with H. P. Moore in The Acton Free Press. In 1927 he became sole owner of the paper.

During his years with the Acton paper he co-authored Acton's Early Days which was compiled from a series of newspaper columns that appeared under the name The Old Man of the Clocktower. He was an active member of The Acton Citizens' Band and his memory was rich with recollections of Calithumpian parades and Minstrel Shows. He served as a director and was president of Acton Fall Fair in 1937. In 1961 he was presented with an Agricultural Service Diploma. He was an Honorary Life Member of Acton Fall Fair. He was a member of the Acton Library Board, the Acton Public School Board, Walker Lodge and Trinity United Church. He served as chairman and as a member of the North Halton High School District Board for a number of years. He was the first president of the Acton Y.M.C.A. Board and played an active role in establishing that facility in the community. For a number of years he was on the advisory committee for the School of Graphic Arts at Ryerson Institute of Technology. He was Justice of the Peace for many years and was active in the Liberal party in Acton and Halton.

His editorship of The Acton Free Press kept him at the table of Acton Council for 25 years and he played an active role in Victory Loan Campaigns. A mosquito bomber was named after the town during one of those campaigns for the promotional work he developed.

He was a member of the executive of the Intermediate Hockey Club and saw the team win its championship in 1939. War Service work and a host of other projects were included in his interests.

In 1943 he purchased The Canadian Champion, Milton, and soon placed it, with the Acton

paper, in the winners' circle for national weekly newspaper honors.

During his association with the business that spanned 47 years he saw and participated in expansion from four employees to the present 34.

As one of the founding members of The Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association, he enjoyed, with Mrs. Dills, a number of conventions, particularly in later years. He served as a director of the national organization and as chairman of the Executive Committee for a number of years.

In 1958 illness forced him to discontinue his active participation in the day-to-day activities of the business but he continued as president of the Dills Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd. which he formed in 1954. Until recently he made almost daily trips to the Acton plant and retained a keen interest in its activities.

His life was one of many loves. He loved his family, his work, his community and a new challenge.

The printing plant in Acton which he acquired in 1927 was always a second family home. His children were always welcome and early in life they were challenged with an opportunity to be useful.

His work placed heavy demands on him physically and mentally and the busy years of the second world war followed in close succession the depression years with the struggles common to that era. His acquisition of the Milton paper in 1943 came at a time when he might have been forgiven for expecting to take life a little easier, but he enjoyed the challenge it provided.

The acquisition of new plant facilities in Acton in 1959 aroused his keen interest although he was physically limited and prevented from playing an active role in the resulting move. His keen assessment of planning and negotiations, however, were ever present in the transaction.

The funeral service was held Saturday from the Rumley-Shoemaker Funeral Home conducted by the Rev. Dwight Engel of Trinity United Church, Acton. Interment was in Fairview Cemetery. A Masonic service was held Friday evening.

Those acting as pallbearers were former Acton Mayor E. Tyler Sr., long-time employee J. R. MacArthur, nephew A. B. Corless, Goderich; Lodge and Church associate R. H. Elliott; former Milton mayor G. C. Gowland and secretary-manager of the Ontario Weekly Newspapers Association, Werden Leavens, Bolton.

He is survived by his wife Isma Macpherson; a daughter Frances (Mrs. C. R. Prosser) Bracebridge, Ont.; two sons, David, R. of Acton and James A. of Milton; and one sister Myrtle (Mrs. F. Browning) Toronto. Predeceasing him were one son George Macpherson Dills; a brother Park and three sisters, Blanche (Mrs. Bob MacPherson), Etta and Maude (Mrs. T. Workman).

Those of us who worked with him and those of us who were his family naturally feel a great sense of loss, for his enthusiasm, imagination, and love of challenge were rich assets he freely shared.

## Service Diploma for O. Johnston At Agricultural Society Dinner

At the Agricultural Society annual dinner Orwell Johnston was especially honored, life member Arthur Swackhamer celebrated his 82nd birthday, and over 100 enjoyed a delicious meal and unusually informative program of slides.

The happy evening followed another successful year of operation of the fair with the usual cooperation between the town and the country community apparent in reports and attendance at the dinner. The event was held Wednesday, January 12, at Ballinacra United Church.

**Service Diploma**  
Another in the series of Agricultural Service Diplomas was awarded again this year. The recipient is Orwell Johnston, an honorary director of the fair board, president of the board in 1940, and a life-long member of the farming community. The certificate, approved by the Department of Agriculture, is given for meritorious service to agriculture. Announcement of the award was made by Don Matthews.

Mr. Johnston first became a director of the fair board in 1920 and served on the heavy horses and concessions committees. He has been a Lorne school trustee, Walker Lodge member and a life-long member of Acton United Church, acting as steward, elder, and for the past many years clerk of session.

His wife, the former Elsie Wiggins, was with him at the dinner as he was applauded by the crowd.

**Head Table**  
The head table was seated against a backdrop of pictures of fairs with gold figures "52" for the 52nd fair. Flowers and other decorations made the tables gay as bowls filled with steaming meat, gravy, vegetables, salads and pickles were passed by the congenial crowd. Pie, coffee and tea followed.

Bill Nelles introduced the head table: fair president Jack Marshall, secretary Mrs. Wallace Swackhamer, extension fieldman Jeff Taylor, warden and Mrs. Bert Hinton, Mayor and Mrs. Les Dubsy, first vice-president Wilmer Fryer, ladies' board president Mrs. Don Matthews, Mr. Matthews, Mrs. Nelles, Miss Acton Fair runner-up Beverly Bruce and

"Happy Birthday" was sung to spry Arthur Swackhamer, who was 82 that day. He came on Acton fair board in 1935 and was president in 1946. He acted as superintendent of the field for many years. A life-long member of Churchill United Church, he was Sunday School superintendent for 35 years. In 1957 he received the certificate for meritorious service to agriculture. He has a certificate his grandfather won for oats grown on the family farm many years ago.

Mr. Swackhamer and just one other honorary life member, A. B. McLan of Acton were able to be present. The names of the other four still living were read: W. L. Hampshire, Smith Griffin Sr., Duncan-Waldie and G. A. Dills. Mr. Dills passed away the next day.

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guest speakers Dr. and Mrs. Allan J. Buchanan.  
Special serviettes were provided by the farm safety council.  
The annual meeting was announced for January 29.  
"We are very proud that the new warden is a member of our society," declared president Marshall as he introduced Mr. Hinton. Director George Wallace was once Wellington warden. Mr. Hinton said there was no place he'd rather be, the day after his election.

Speaking briefly Mayor Dubsy (Continued on Page Three)

Acton Hydro's inaugural meeting brought no changes as far as personnel is concerned when the members met Thursday evening of last week. Returned as chairman was Ted Tyler Sr., with vice-chairman Doug Dawkins continuing in this capacity.

Committees appointed include property Doug Dawkins and Orval Brown and finance Wilfred McEachern and Les Dubsy.

Although construction of the proposed new hydro building has reached a temporary stalemate due to excessive construction costs, the commission received a letter approving the project under the winter works program. Approval for the building from Ontario Hydro has not been received to date.

## Seek Price of Underground Services in New Districts

**Underground Services**  
Mayor Les Dubsy informed members the town was interested in underground hydro services in new subdivisions and asked a costing for underground services on the new section of Lakeview subdivision being opened as opposed to overhead services.

Commission members discussed a replacement or possible repairs to the Volkswagen truck used by the meter reader. The property committee was



ORWELL JOHNSTON

also authorized to investigate the air conditioner in the hydro office which has constantly been a headache.  
Account's totalling \$22,684.78 were approved for payment.

## School Carnival On March 17

Part-time recreation director Howard Pearce held his first formal meeting Thursday evening of last week when he met with four public school teachers to make plans for the coming public school carnival.

**Present at Meeting**  
Present for the meeting were principal Garry Dawkins of Spynside school, Courtney Saunders from Pineview school and Stewart Cowan and Edward Leatherland from the M. Z. Bennett school.

The small group reviewed previous school carnivals and discussed details for this year's carnival set for March 17. A few changes have been planned including the possibility of an intermission to break the evening and allow competitors a brief rest.

## George Williams Heads Parks Board For 1966

Acton Board of Parks Management will be headed this year by George Williams, who was chosen as chairman at the inaugural session Thursday night of last week.

Acting as vice-chairman will be Nino Braida with Gordon Harding assuming the role of administration chairman, assisted by newcomer Brendan Ahearn. Also present for the meeting were council representative Earl Masales and retiring secretary Owen Coultrup. Also present were Cliff Bradley and William Williams.

Following official notification from Owen Coultrup regarding his resignation, it was agreed to hire Art Cooper as a replacement. Mr. Cooper was also hired as secretary of the Recreation Committee. Both parks board and recreation committee share the secretary's salary of \$750 with the board paying \$250 and committee \$500.

Board members authorized the secretary to set up a savings account for repair of floodlights at the park. The board charges a rental fee for use of the lights and this money is used for repair of the lights.

Also under brief discussion was a caretaker for the park, gate attendance man and park rental charge. The vice-chairman suggested the gate admissions should be analyzed as attendance

## See TV

Pupils at both the M. Z. Bennett and Robert Little public schools are enjoying the new mathematics course being offered on TV. Both schools now have portable TV sets, which can be moved from room to room when necessary.

## Guelph Guests Join Dancers

The auditorium at the Robert Little public school was bouncing with music and dancers Wednesday evening of last week when 13 couples from the Guelph Square Dance Club joined with Acton members for the weekly dance session.

Headed by instructors Mr. and Mrs. Norman Wilcox of Bramalea, the dancers enjoyed themselves and welcomed four new couples who attended their first outing. Club members are hopeful more couples will join and attend the weekly Wednesday night dances.

To date, a new name has not been selected for the club but members have already submitted suggestions and the executive will choose a title for the club next month.

Last month's report gave the names of secretaries Mr. and Mrs. E. Whitbread. It should have stated Mr. and Mrs. E. Whitred.

## 150 Attend

## Legion Choraliers Entertain At Annual Dinner for Branch

Over 150 Legionnaires enjoyed a hot beef dinner with all the trimmings during the annual Legion dinner Saturday evening. Highlighting the evening were songs by the Legion Choraliers under the leadership of George Musselle.

Legion Padre, Rev. A. H. McKenzie was master of ceremonies and welcomed the large number of Legionnaires. He told the veterans Branch 197 was "on the ball" but unfortunately a few members were not pulling their weight. He noted the Branch had done very commendable work the past few years and stated the image of the branch would improve if everyone pitched in to help.

Past president James Gunn introduced the following head table: second vice-president Harry Hawkins, M.P. Dr. Harry Harley, past vice-president Mrs. Harvey Lambert, Mayor Les Dubsy, president Max Storey, Padre A. H. McKenzie, Zone Commander Dave Capper, past first vice-president Hamilton Peal, Acton Reeve and County Warden H. H. Hinton, first vice-president Gordon James, Rev. S. Thoman of the Pentecostal church, Corporal Ray Mason of the Acton O.P.P. Detachment and Rev. McMurray of St. Alban's Anglican church.

A special welcome was extended to Legionnaire Wilfred Coley, Boer War and World War I vet as well as a member of the Veterans' Guard during World War 2.

Lady Members of the Legion present for the dinner included Mrs. Jim McKnight and Mrs. Harvey Lambert.

Zone Commander Dave Capper, past vice-president J. Gunn with the past president's medal and expressed his thanks to the branch for its co-operation to the Zone.

The retiring president told the membership the Branch had to operate as a business as it cost money to open the doors. He asked full co-operation from the membership to the newly-installed president Max Storey.

Mr. Storey told the veterans Branch 197 had a big job to do in 1966 and said the success of the Branch depended on each member. He asked members to give assistance when called on for dances and other functions.

Chorale leader George Musselle introduced the numbers which his group, decked out in their new gold jackets with Legion crest, sang. First on the list was a branch favorite "The Wifepool Song" followed by "The Bells of St. Marys", "Kentucky Babe", "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and as an encore following a standing ovation "Battle Eve".

## Minor Hockey

It's Minor Hockey Week from January 22 to January 29, and 50 civic-minded merchants have sponsored the display ad backing the event in this week's paper. Support minor hockey, and the merchants whose interests are in Acton.

## Shorthorn Sales

A Shorthorn bull from the herd of S. G. Bennett, Georgetown, has been sold to Jack Deacon of Oklahoma, a director of the American Shorthorn Association. This was the first son of the massive Scotsdale Tehran, who in turn is by Scotsdale Navarre, 2,250 lb. bull.

S. E. Griffin and Son, Acton, sold a bull to Harry Ingraham, Prince William, N.B., and three females to Ken Parkinson, Annapriort.



—Staff Photo

PAST PRESIDENT'S MEDAL was presented Jim Gunn Saturday evening at the annual Legion dinner by Zone Commander Dave Capper. Mr. Gunn served as president of Branch 197 for the past two years.