

Acton proud of top-notch band active since 1875 as winners

Acton Citizens' Band glances back into its past, outlines its present, and takes a peek into the future.

Scarlet coats, shining brass, martial music—everyone loves a parade and every town should have a band. Acton's band has been playing and parading since about 1875. There is some doubt about this exact date, it may well have been earlier, but solid evidence places the band's beginnings no later than 1875. Thus Acton Citizens' Band is one of the oldest and most venerable institutions in the town and today, it is still active and thriving, producing musicians for tomorrow.

The band was founded by a real musical enthusiast, John Hill, way back in those early days. John Hill operated a store in Acton and for many years, apparently, bandmen, musical instruments and trade goods competed for space in his premises. In later years, he moved the band to more adequate quarters in the Sons of Temperance Hall for the regular practices.

It was here that he instructed many of the boys of the town in the finer points of playing a musical instrument. One story from his days as bandmaster tells of Acton Band taking first prize at the county fair against competing bands from Norval, Milton and Oakville. The coveted first place was won in part through a special arrangement of 'The Queen' which John Hill had prepared for the event.

Another story tells of him catching a young lad pounding on the door of the hall during a practice; the would-be mischief maker was subsequently converted into one of the finest drummers the band ever had.

The foundations John Hill laid were solid ones and many of his boys, as men, kept the band alive through the years. They in turn have passed along John Hill's traditions so that these come, still fresh, to the young players in training today. One of John Hill's boys was Charles Mason. An octogenarian today, 'Charlie', as he is familiarly called, was still a very active member of the band until about a year ago. He has a special place in the memories of many present day band members.

Back in the early 1940's, the band almost ceased to exist. Younger men had gone off to the war and older members of the band found it too difficult to carry on all by themselves. 'Charlie' gathered together a group of about 25 young boys, secured the band's instruments, and a small donation from Council, and given its blessing, started a band.

With much courage and energy, a great deal of patience and hard work, and a gentlemanly "damn" or two, he made a band. This Boys' Band soon became a Boys and Girls' Band and it played for many a parade and garden party in Acton and the surrounding countryside. The crowning achievement of this band and Charles Mason's work came when he led it to a first place in its class at the Canadian National Exhibition in 1947.

Unfortunately, as always happens, the boys and girls grew up and left town for schooling or jobs, and the band rapidly dwindled. These boys and girls, however, had received a priceless legacy of training. From Charlie's boys have come a veterinarian, a doctor, two lawyers, two PhD's in science, two chemists, a newspaper editor and a Lieut. Commander in the Navy, to mention a few. The others, boys and girls, have become worthy citizens, making contributions in service and public responsibility far above the average in their communities.

Not all of the boys left, however. Some stayed and these, enthused with the traditions of band music in Acton, reorganized the band into its present day form. They brought some of the old members out of retirement, scouted out new members, and proceeded to train a new crop of boys.

Charles Mason retired as the bandmaster, although he continued as an active playing member of the band. His experience and knowledge were made use of in subsequent years, as he served on the band executive.

In his place as bandmaster in 1950 came A. H. Perrott, a very fine musician with many band championship honors to his credit as leader of the Lorne Scots regimental band. He, in turn, led the band to a first place in



TED TYLER JR.
President

the band competitions of the Waterloo Musical Festival and has continued as bandmaster to the present.

Acton Citizens' Band today has 32 members in its senior section, 12 of them teenagers, and 13 in its intermediate group. The intermediates, youngsters with a sprinkling of adult learners, will very shortly have completed two years of training to become full-fledged senior band members.

Twelve beginners have started training on various instruments and will eventually join the senior band. More beginners will be taken into classes as more instruments become available.

The band is supported by the Municipal Band Tax By-law, which allots one-half mill on the general rate towards support of a band. This financial support has permitted the band to con-

tinue and expand its program of musical recreation. It can offer to as many boys and men as are interested, free use of a musical instrument and free tuition on that instrument.

The band is dedicated to two purposes. Its first and most important one is that of offering in the community, musical recreation for those citizens, young and old, who enjoy and profit from it. Its second and perhaps no less important function is that of supplying music for parades, civic functions and concerts in the community.

But what of the future? The band is just now completing construction and development of a Community Music Center and Park. This music center, perhaps unique in its design and economy of construction, will be primarily used for the band's own practices and instruction classes.

It is hoped, however, that it will be used as well for musical entertainments and recitals of all kinds and is designed with this object in view. The music center is now serving, even in its unfinished condition, as a center for social activities and banquets for many community groups. The center has an outdoor concert platform attached to it, and when development of the park is completed, will be an ideal location for outdoor summer band concerts, picnics and garden parties.

The band, through its expanding training program, hopes to have a fully developed concert band of 50 members by its centennial year in 1975. In addition, a junior band of 25 or 30 players is envisaged. The instruction program, as it is now being developed, makes use of many of the regular band members as beginning instructors for three to five players for a period of a year.

At this time, the bandmaster takes over and develops the whole group of beginners to senior band standards. The band executive is also considering a program which will include girls' activities. Until now, this has been impossible; with facilities of the music center available, more concrete plans can be developed.

The band has also discussed ways in which other types of musical recreation in the community might be sponsored and encouraged; perhaps this will be a field for future expansion of band activities.

As the band enters its 91st year, its members cannot help

Planning board outlines projects includes expansion

Planning Board chairman Aldo Braida expresses the views of this board to clarify the aims and purposes of planning. Following is his report.

Many people think that planning is unnecessary and that it merely adds an additional burden to the cost of operating the Town of Acton.

These people do not realize that the purpose of planning is to assist in the orderly and progressive development of the Town of Acton and that without proper planning and adequate by-laws, there would be utter chaos in urban development, which would eventually cost more to remedy than the small amount expended for proper planning in the first instance.

A few years ago, the Town of Acton Planning Board realized that the presently existing zoning by-law was inadequate for the future development of the town of Acton and retained consultants to draw a new Official Plan for the town, setting out the long range goals in development and expansion.

This Official Plan was passed and approved by the Ontario Government a few weeks ago and the Planning Board is now in a position to present the new Zoning By-law and map to council for its approval and after it has been passed, it will be forwarded to the Ontario Government for its approval.

This approval will be given after a public hearing has been held by the Ontario Municipal Board to hear and deal with any objections by the property owners of the Town of Acton who think that they have been unfairly dealt with by the Zoning By-law.

Prior to the Planning Board approving of the Official Plan and Zoning By-law drawn by the consultants, many meetings were held by the board to consider them, and two public meetings were held at which objections were received and subsequently dealt with.

but feel that if John Hill could return among them, he would soon be right at home in his old band. His work has been carried on; today we have Acton Citizens' Band, an organization proud of its past and full of enthusiasm for the challenges of its future.



ALDO BRAIDA
Chairman

The Acton Planning Board also deals with applications for amendments to the Official Plan and to the Zoning By-law and generally in all areas where orderly planning is necessary.

Most of the residential and industrial areas for future expansion in the town will be utilized within the next five to ten years and town council in the near future will be contemplating annexation of lands in the township of Esqueping.

The Acton Planning Board's next project will be, along with its consultants, to determine what problems annexation will give rise to with respect to traffic flow, capacity of sewer and watermains, sewerage disposal, street patterns, parks and conservation areas, population density and commercial, residential and industrial development.

Without planning properly for the future and obtaining an idea of the problems which we shall have to face, development and expansion of our town will be curtailed and remedying of unforeseen problems will cause added expense to the taxpayer.

The members of your Planning Board are appointed by council on a staggered three year term and in addition, two members of council are appointed yearly.

Planning Board members for 1966 are as follows: Aldo Braida, chairman; Les Duby, council representative; Robert Drinkwater, council representative; William Wilson, Ed Footitt, Neil Miller, William Pendleton; J. McGeachie, secretary.

All the above members and their predecessors on past Planning Boards have worked together for the betterment of the Town of Acton in the past and for its increased prosperity in the future.

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