

A hundred candles on our cake...

Canada's 100th birthday party on July 1 will likely be celebrated with the traditional reserve associated with Canadians.

A few will kick over the traces and really let go in an orgy of flag waving and yahooping but most Canadians will celebrate quietly with an appreciation for their country which goes deep and needs no flamboyant emotional outlet.

They realize Canada is not the Garden of Eden. There are many things about Canada and Canadians which could be better. It has been that way since the fathers of confederation finally convinced the inhabitants of what is now Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario they should unite in one federation.

Vision, a commodity as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth, then as well as now, persuaded these bearded patriarchs that despite all the regional differences in language, race and religion, we people in British North America were very much alike. There's a common bond, not always apparent, except to the observant.

Most of us are familiar with the stereotype picture of the Fathers of Confederation on Prince Edward Island, looking like latter day Moses. It's hard to realize they were flesh and blood figures wrestling with real problems. And if you can believe present day research some of them had a bit of the devil in them.

The devil in those days was associated with whisky and women, which some of our great grandfathers showed a marked partiality for in large quantities and hour glass figures, in that order.

Despite these human weaknesses they forged a confederation of four very insular parts of British North America which lasts to this day and promises to last a lot longer, prophets of doom to the contrary.

How would the folks back home take the news?

Just like you'd expect. Some rhapsodized the new nation so strongly people living in log cabins in the midst of thick bush had to pinch themselves to make sure they weren't already in Paradise.

Others forecast dire results, charging sell-out to the enemy, unnamed, but there nevertheless.

The old Toronto Globe on July 1, 1867, reported, "With the first dawn of this gladsome midsummer morn, we hail the birthday of a new nationality."

Enthusiastic Canadians, according to the papers, attended fireworks displays, concerts, horse races, a grand balloon ascension and musketry "feu de joie", took railway excursions and danced till the coal oil lamps rattled.

"The unanimity and cordiality," enthused The Globe, "with which all sections of the people of Canada accept the new Constitution, gives the happiest omen of its successful operation."

Evidently the Mayor of Dorchester, Quebec, a Mr. LaBerge, didn't take The Globe because he would not sanction holding of a celebration. His grounds? He believed Confederation "to be a public misfortune and that, before rejoicing, the people should wait at least one year to see how the Union would work."

Down in the bluenose country, they were more vehement. The Halifax Morning Chronicle, in the style of an obituary, editorialized:

DIED

Last night, at 12 o'clock, the free and enlightened Province of Nova Scotia. Deceased was the off-spring of old English stock, and promised to have proved an honour and support to her parents in their declining years. Her death was occasioned by the unnatural treatment received at the hands of some of her ungrateful sons, who taking advantage of the position she had afforded them, betrayed her to the enemy. Funeral will take place from the Grand Parade this day at nine o'clock. Friends are requested not to attend, as her enemies, with becoming scorn, intend to insult the occasion with rejoicing.

There was no newspaper in Acton and district at that time to report on the reaction of folks in this northern Esquimesing section of Upper Canada. You can be fairly certain there was mixed reaction like in most other places. The pros and cons of the move would be debated with much bias and little objectivity since the times weren't noted for fence sitters. Fence viewers was about as near as you could get without risking a beating.

The new country, headed by the wily Scot Macdonald, somehow functioned so well after its first few faltering steps there were other parts of the huge Canadian shield eager to join up. In 1870 the North-West Territories came in, part of which was divided into Manitoba and created a fifth province. In 1871 British Columbia became the sixth on the condition the Dominion Pacific Railway connect them to the rest of Canada.

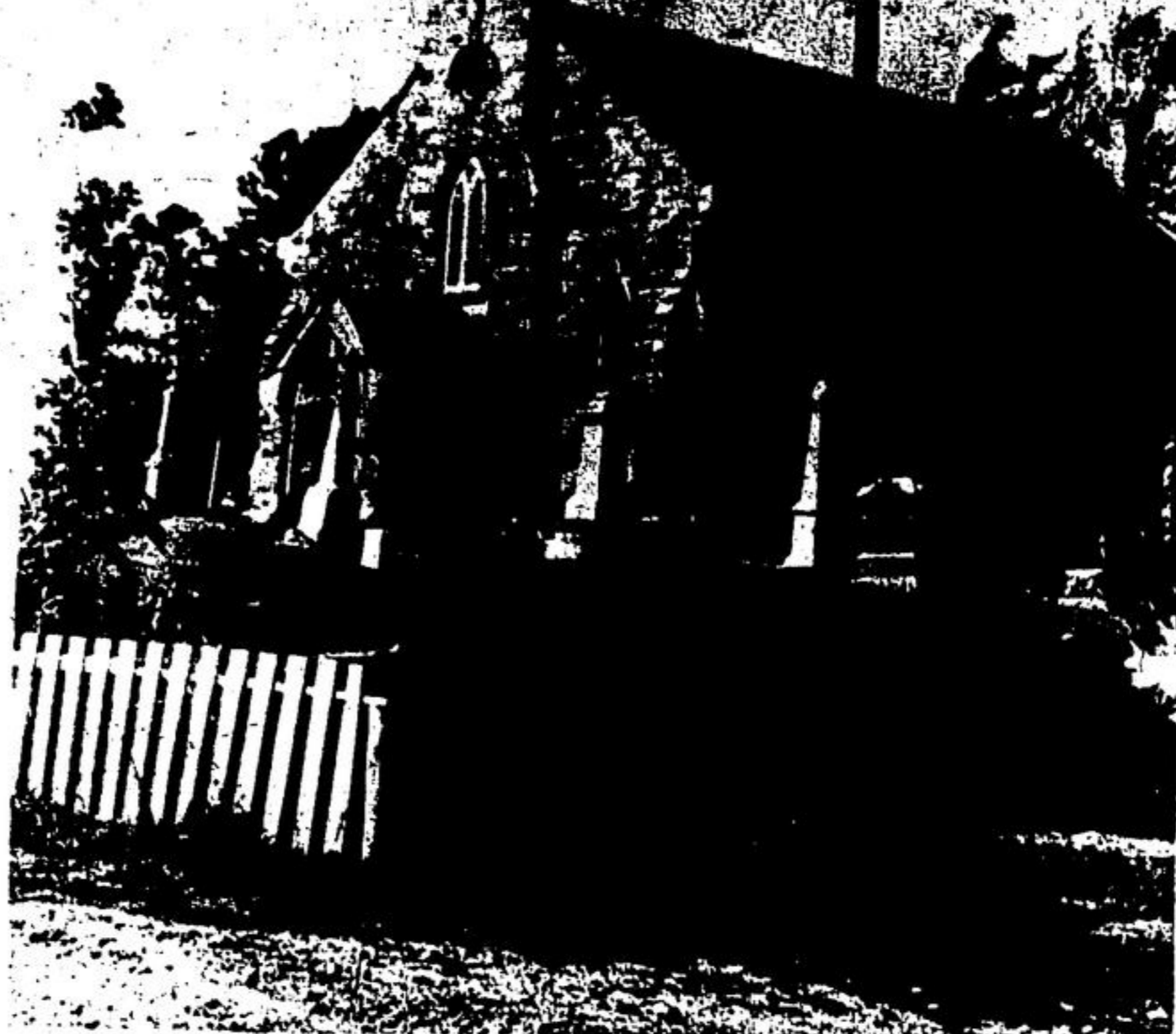
Prince Edward Island, long revered as the birthplace of Confederation, stood aloof until 1873 when the spud islanders finally followed the lead of their maritime brethren.

Unlike The Island Argus which championed Confederation, The Patriot suggested it was an unwise move in an editorial part of which follows: "On Tuesday, whether for weal or woe, Prince Edward Island became a province of the Dominion of Canada. The Church and City bells also rang out a lively peal, and the Volunteers under review at the City Park, fired a feu de joie. So far as powder and metal could do it there was for a short time a terrible din. But among the people who thronged the streets there was no enthusiasm."

"A few moments before 12, Mr. Sheriff Watson stepped forward on the balcony of the Colonial Building and read the Union Proclamation. He was accompanied by two ladies and about a half a dozen gentlemen. The audience below within hearing consisted of three persons, and even they did not appear to be very attentive. After the reading of the Proclamation was concluded, the gentlemen on the balcony gave a cheer, but the three persons below responded never a word."

Inspiring wasn't it? But despite these bursts of enthusiasm, the Yukon came into the Union and in 1905, the biggest year for Confederation since 1867, Saskatchewan and Alberta entered simultaneously.

Canada's 10th province - Newfoundland, first discovered by the great navigators, finally entered Confederation in 1949 and besides bringing a long tradition of individualism started a train of Newfie jokes.



IN THE HEART of the Scotch Block sits grey stone Boston Presbyterian church, testimony to the faith of those who settled Esquimesing township in the years before confederation. Much like the churches of their homeland, Scottish masons built it to endure the harsh winters of their adopted land. It is the oldest church in Esquimesing, preceded by a pine board building built in 1825. The present church was started in 1866. The 147th anniversary was held Sunday, June 18.



Sugar and Spice

by Bill Smiley

Since we are 100 years old this week, I should be grinding out an Ode to Canada. But its so hot the very thought of it makes me feel about 100 years old. (Come on, Smiley, it ain't that hot.)

Instead, let's have an honest look at ourselves, to find out what kind of a tribe those ten decades produced.

Trying to pin down the Canadian national character is like trying to thread a needle in the dark, blind-folded, and half-stoned. Trouble is, any way you add up the individual characteristics, they come out spelling schizophrenia.

For example, the experts tell us that we are extremely inarticulate people. That means we don't talk much. Maybe it's because we haven't anything worth saying and are too proud to show our ignorance. But at the same time, we are the world's champion yakkers. According to the telephone companies, Canadians spend more time on the blower than any other nation, proportionately. Yes, Jack, my wife does too. Undoubtedly this is a backlash from pioneer days, when women often went for weeks without a chance for a good talk with another woman. They're trying to catch up.

Canada was complete. All the pieces of the jigsaw are together. It took a hundred years to put the puzzle together. Some people are predicting it won't last much longer. We've got separatists in Quebec. Yanks to the south and ice to the north.

We've got troubles, troubles, troubles. Funny though, isn't it! That's the way we started out!

Another contradiction. In pioneering, exploring, wars, we have shown ourselves bold, adventuresome, brave. Yet we are timid about investing our money in Canada, and we also buy more insurance, per capita, than any other country. Why this caution, this desire for security? There's something Freudian about it: mother-country; breastfed too long; return to the womb or something. But we haven't time to figure that one out today.

We are as materialistic as we could be, and with some reason. It takes more than a century to get from sod shanty to soqata, from barn-raising to ballet. At the same time we are extremely culture-conscious, and are secretly delighted with the Stratford Festival and the National Ballet and our sprinkling of symphony orchestras. As long as we don't have to attend.

Despite our reverence for culture, we refuse to read. The quickest way to lose your shirt in Canada is to open a book store. In a population of 20 million, a new book that sells 10,000 copies is a runaway best-seller. It must be a hangover from the pioneer attitude that a person should be "doing something" and that reading doesn't come in this category. Or is it because we have too much money and too many tovs?

Something else we refuse to do is walk. Europeans enjoy walking. Englishmen love it. Why won't we? Our trouble probably is, in equal parts: too far to anywhere, wanting to get there in a hurry; car-worship; and plain laziness.

We are heavy boozers, as the statistics show, and can't hold our liquor, as a glance around at the next party will show. Why? Do we drink so much because we are so dull we can't stand each other without the grape? Or is it because drink has always been associated with sin in this country, and man is born to sin?

Yes, we play hard, and most of us work hard. The sad thing is that the only reason we work hard is to enable us to get things with which to play hard: boats and barbecues and built-in bars; cottages and cars and curling memberships.

Are we a religious people? Well, we have vast numbers of churches of every conceivable denomination, most of them tottering on the brink of bankruptcy. But we are decent enough to leave God in church, where he belongs. He is rarely mentioned on weekdays, and usually then only as a prefix for another word.

We are without prejudice and have laws to prove it. But let's go on being honest, and admit the nation is riddled with prejudice based on race, religion, language, color, politics, and money. Don't agree? Just try joining one of those exclusive Jewish clubs if you happen to be a Black Muslim. Or getting a teaching job in a French convent school if your a Jewish Eskimo.

We have a few other little quirks, but I wouldn't trade my Canadian citizenship for four million in gold bullion. How about you?

There's a topic for your guest column, in our Centennial Save-Smiley Contest. Prize is now \$50 cash. Get cracking.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press, Thursday, June 26, 1947

Tuesday Canada will mark her eightieth birthday since Confederation. Canada has gone far and indications are that the Dominion will see even greater advances in the years ahead. Canadians have every cause for optimism.

The mid-week holiday this year isn't quite as popular as Monday holidays.

Saturday was a feast for lovers of band music in Acton. Judging by the crowds that lined the streets and went to the tattoo in Acton park, the town and country for miles around liked the bands. The parade was headed by Boys and Girls' Band under C. W. Mason and followed by bands from Alton, Guelph, Hillsburg, Rockwood, Preston and Ferris as well as the Lorne Scots. Acton school children paraded with the band. Little Peter Lawson, who conducted the Acton band, drew a round of applause. W. H. Denny was conductor of ceremonies.

The past week has seen quite a lot of activity in launching boats on Fairy Lake. G. Rognavaldson launched a skiff and his father and brother constructed. Mr. J. B. Chalmers had two model freighters and Mr. F. L. Wright had a model sail boat.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press, Thursday, June 28, 1917.

From one aspect, the semi-centennial of Canadian confederation is being overshadowed by the pressing necessities of war and the series of political crisis through which Canada is passing this summer. From another view, however, the critical circumstances of the present time make this semi-centennial even more significant. If it had occurred during a time of peace and prosperity there would doubtless have been many more fireworks displayed and much more noise and jubilation. Ontario's part in the celebration, by its quietness and dignity will, it is hoped, interpret the spirit of the people of the province.

The very successful pastorate of Rev. H. W. Avison terminated in Acton last Sunday. His new field of labor is at Welland. A large number of members of the congregation were at the station to say farewell. Rev. R. S. E. Large and wife and little girlie arrived yesterday.

Sunday morning Rev. J. Wilson will preach in the Confederation Jubilee. When the milk by-law was published it was thought it might curtail the business. The opposite has been the result. Already five licenses have been issued for sale of milk in Acton: John Nelson, T. P. Watkins, A. J. Murray who purchased the business from G. W. Masales; Alex Donald and S. M. Lasby. All milk offered for sale must now be bottled.

At a well-attended meeting of Halton Reform Association E. H. Cleaver of Burlington was the unanimous choice of the convention as candidate for the Ontario Legislature. He is the grandson of one of the original settlers, his grandfather having come from Pennsylvania at the time of the U. E. Loyalists.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press, Thursday, June 30, 1892.

Put out your flags and hunting for our national holiday tomorrow! Acton will have hundreds of visitors to the celebration. The celebration committee has promised a foot ball match, Gun Club contest, Lacrosse match, tug-of-war, horse races in the park and a grand concert in the town hall. Horses are arriving already for the races.

Strawberries are plentiful and cheap. Five to seven cents is the price. There is considerable complaint because the street lights are not lighted these dark nights.

Thirteen candidates from Acton's schools went to the entrance examinations at Georgetown. The Public School examinations were not largely attended. The pupils acquitted themselves well.

The first exhibit to arrive at Chicago for the World's Fair consists of 13 enormous dogs from Canada.

The school board estimates for the year were presented and the sum of \$1,803 is required, \$1,490 of it for salaries, and \$147 for fuel. James Grant was paid 70 cents for carting seats and desks. Miss Cleveland has resigned, and a new teacher with second class certificate will be advertised for, salary not to exceed \$275 per annum.

The redistribution Bill, after lengthy and warlike discussion has passed the House of Commons.

Advertisement: "Here Johnnie, your mother doesn't understand why I am able to get out my big washings quicker and nicer than she does. Take this tablet of 'Sunlight' soap and tell her to use it according to directions. Tell her that this soap will also keep her hands nice and soft and doesn't shrink flannels."

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Canadian Champion, June 28, 1867.

On Tuesday last, some of the family of John Dewar of Esquimesing saw a young boy running out of their house, holding something against his breast. On pursuing him, he took to his heels and escaped. After a search, it was discovered that two ten dollar packages of silver were missing, and Mr. Dewar proceeded to Milton, and accompanied by the Mayor, went to the residence of a Miltonian, whose son was accused.

The women who saw him assert that Louis was the boy. His father was working on the next farm belonging to R. Graham, and it is supposed that the boy, seeing no one in, perpetrated the robbery. He is a youth of but seven summers, and we may well ask, if such things be done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?

The boy strenuously denied it, calling upon his Maker to stop his breath if he were guilty. So the matter ends for the present, but it is to be hoped that the perpetrator will be punished, and sent for a few years to the reformatory, for if he gets off, it is but an encouragement to him and to other bad boys to go on to yet higher feats in wickedness.

Free Press

Church News

TRINITY CHURCH  
(The United Church of Canada)  
Minister: Rev. Gordon A. Turner  
Organist: Mr. George Elliott, M.A., Ph.D.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA  
KNOX CHURCH, ACTON  
Rev. Andrew H. McKenzie, B.A., B.D. Minister  
Mr. E. A. Hansen, B.A. Organist and Choir Master

Thursday, June 29 - 8.00 p.m. Induction Service at Trinity United for Rev. Gordon A. Turner.

SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1967  
Combined Summer Services in Trinity United Church. Preacher Rev. Gordon A. Turner.  
10.00 a.m.—Special Centennial Service.

ACTON BAPTIST CHURCH  
Founded 1842  
Pastor: Rev. Stanley Gammon  
Res. 144 Tildy Ave., Ph. 853-1615

SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1967  
10.00 a.m.—Church School and Adult Class.  
11.15 a.m.—Morning Worship. "Can We Be Sure?"  
No Evening Service during July and Aug.  
Wednesday, 7.30 p.m.—Prayer and Bible Study.  
Thursday, 7.30 p.m.—Choir Practice.  
Thought for the week: Your faith should show in your face.

MAPLE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH  
(Georgetown)

SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1967  
9.45 a.m.—Sunday School.  
11.00 a.m.—Morning Service.  
7.00 p.m.—Evening Service.  
Wednesday, 8 p.m.—Prayer meeting.  
Acton 853-1956 Georgetown 871-6665

EVANGEL PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE  
P.A.O.C. 33 Churchhill Road  
Rev. S. M. Thoman, Pastor, 853-2715

SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1967  
10.00 a.m.—Sunday School.  
11.00 a.m.—Morning Worship.  
7.00 p.m.—Evangelistic Service. Rev. Thomas Lato will minister.  
Tuesday, 8 p.m.—Prayer and Bible Study.  
Thursday, 8 p.m.—Christ Ambassadors.  
Brasides Camp, near Paris, Ont., July 1-15.

BETH-EL  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH  
Acton, Ontario.

SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1967  
10.00 a.m.—English Service.  
11.10 a.m.—Sunday School.  
2.30 p.m.—Alternating Dutch and English Service.  
Saturday — Bible Classes, 10-12.30 a.m.  
LISTEN EVERY SUNDAY  
The "Back to God Hour" — Radio Minister Dr. J. H. Nederhooft, Christian Reformed Church.  
CHIQ 1280—10.00 a.m.  
CKFH 1430—9.30 a.m.  
CKEY 590—8.30 a.m.  
Everyone Welcome

THE CHURCH OF  
ST. ALBAN THE MARTYR  
ANGELICAN  
Corner Willow St. and St. Alban's Drive  
Rev. Ritchie McMurray, M.A., S.T.B.

Thursday, June 29—Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul the Apostles.  
10.00 a.m.—Holy Eucharist.  
SUNDAY, JULY 2, 1967  
Trinity VI  
10.00 a.m.—The Holy Eucharist.  
The parish is delighted to have the Reverend Eric C. Mills of St. George's, Georgetown once again with us. Fr. Mills will be in charge of the parish during July.

THE ACTON FREE PRESS

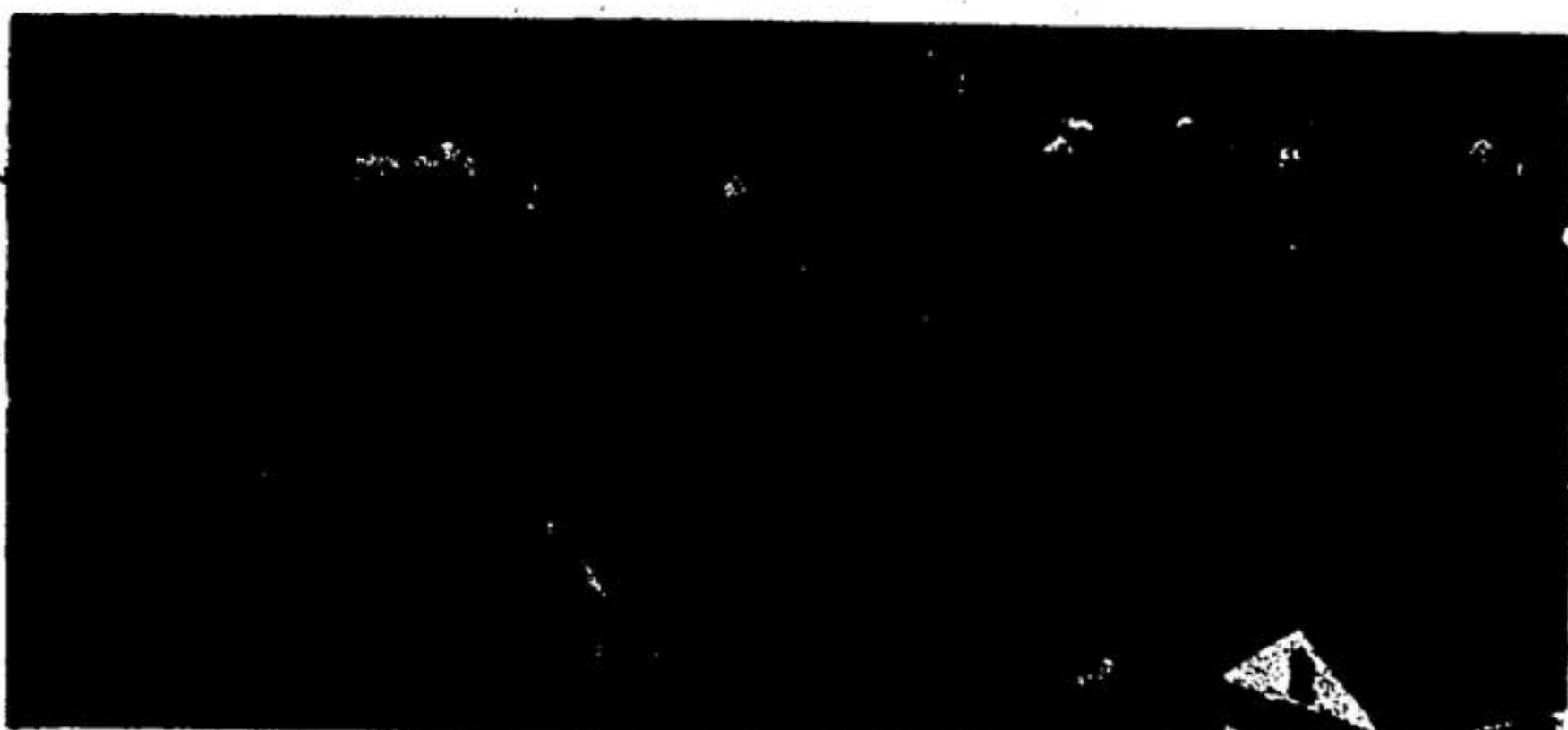
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Centennial Picture Gallery



VIEW OF ACTON was reproduced as a post card shortly after the turn of the century, and the picture was last for this series by Herb Ritchie. In the centre, slightly to the right is St. Joseph's church facing on Church St. Rev. V. J. Morgan's house is farther toward the right. To the left of centre, at the back, is the former Methodist church facing Mill St. Far at the back on the left is the Storey Glove factory which faced on Bower Ave.