

At last — the true story

# How George saved our famous tree

by Larry Martin

Before what must be the plant world's equivalent of Bubonic Plague swept in from Holland last decade, you could stand almost anywhere in the rural southern Ontario and be reasonably sure that not too far below were the gnarled roots of an elm tree.

When public school children picked up their paint brushes to do still life, the disproportionate block of brown and green, if it had any shape at all, was sure to have just the slightest hint of an elm about it.

Far from preferable for stove-wood, useless for furniture, rendered obsolete when farm wagons went steel and cement



CROOKED ELM

Gone but never to be forgotten

came into general use for barn flooring, they kept their race going unhindered in little communities on the escarpment and elsewhere.

They were so much a part of the local scene, you could hardly remember what they looked like when you gave any thought to it, but one — through a determined effort to live despite the odds — became perhaps the only element of Haltoniana to make Ripley's list of global what-nots.

With its trunk pushing upward into the atmosphere, then plummeting back to near ground level before finally stretching towards the sky in more or less normal fashion once more, there was no denying "Old Gooseneck" had something all the others hadn't.

For three generations, it stood waving to the traffic on Highway 25, just north of Five Sidroad.

As the horses gave in to the Model T's and they in turn progressed to the glass and steel monsters of the 1960's, a lot of people passed by.

There were the Haltonians, most of whom had long since gotten over slowing down to stare. There were the Sunday drivers from out of town, who sometimes pulled over and took pictures. And in both groups there were The Experts — people who KNEW what made Gooseneck the way it was.

"The Indians disfigured it to point to an encampment," or "A big tree fell on it years ago," THEY said. Some probably assumed it was just another advertising gimmick for a local plumber.

GEORGE ELLIOT



He saved tree from woodsman's axe

As far as the world at large was concerned, no-one really knew why the tree was bent double in two places.

Recently, The Champion talked to a man who cleared up the mystery for all time.

Jack Elliot, of Court St. Milton, remembers the famous plant when it was a one-and-one-half inch sapling.

When his father, J. R. Elliot bought what is now the Jefferson farm in 1906, it had a pine stump fence marking off the boundary nearest Highway 25.

Two or three years later Mr. Elliot decided to replace the stumps with a wire fence, and a neighbor, Bert Marsh, was called in to help.

As the men axed their way through the maze of pine roots, the boys skated on the small pond nearby.

At Mr. Marsh's call, they left the pond and went over to look at what he'd discovered — a small elm tree winding its way through a stump.

Since it was in the path of the new fence, Mr. Marsh raised his axe to remove it.

Jack's younger brother stepped forward and said if it was left alone, he would dig it out and replant it near the house.

The axeman attacked the gnarled stumps surrounding it instead, and the tree lived on beside the highway, comfortably moist from the bog that existed there before the road was lowered.

What became of that small, red-headed boy's plans to transplant Old Gooseneck is unknown — but the boy isn't.

He grew up to be Halton County Judge George E. Elliot, a respected and familiar man until his death in 1965 — just two years before the tree itself died.

Old Gooseneck, though dead, will live on forever in the memories of some. Before the Department of Highways moved in to knock it down Halton Museum curator Major H. J. Newman decided the curved section bore preserving at his rustic Kelso complex of Canadians.

It took just a simple request and an hour's work to level the tree, cut off the bent elbow sections and truck them to Kelso. In the spring, Old Gooseneck, minus its top part, will be admirably preserved and on display to thousands of visitors.

Thank you, George Elliot.



**HOPES OF FINISHING** most of the music centre this year were expressed at the inaugural meeting of Acton Citizens' Band, Sunday evening. Attending, seated left to right, immediate past president Ted Tyler Jr., Jim Vostry, committee; Dr. George Elliott, bandmaster and secretary-treasurer; Charles Kingsmill, first vice-president; Bill Buchanan, president;

Gordon Ramsden, second vice-president; Chuck Wright, Sims McPhedran and Barry Buchanan of the committee. Back row, Bing Ramsden, past president; Gord Gibbins, librarian; Dr. G. Oakes, council's representative on the committee. Lunch was served after the meeting by Mrs. Bill Buchanan and Heather Buchanan. (Staff Photo)

## Elmer Smith named honorary member of Y board after 12 years' service

At the annual meeting of Murray Memorial Y.M.C.A. board last Thursday evening, W. D. Elmer Smith was made an honorary member of the board, after 12 years of very active service. Mr. Smith has been an enthusiastic worker in the Y, a board member, chairman and treasurer.

The elections and year end reports characterized the meeting in the Y.

Elected to the board were president, William Wilson (2nd year); vice-president Garry Bateman (Pres. Y's Men); secretary, Phil Elliott (3rd year); treasurer, Garnet McKenzie (2nd year); board members, John Last (3rd year), Jake Van der Kooy

(3rd year), Ed Leatherland (2nd year), Bob Laughlin (1st year), Bob Bruce (1st year), Anthony Strango (1st year); honorary Elmer Smith.

Nomination committee members were chairman John Last, Phil Elliott and Garnet McKenzie.

New members added for a three-year term are Robert Bruce, well-known in Acton and vicinity; Bob Laughlin, Acton high school teacher and former member of the Y.M.C.A. in Belleville, and Anthony Strango, public relations officer for Export Tool in Toronto.

The first regular meeting of the Y board is Thursday, February 1 to establish committees, strike a budget, transfer books, etc.

Treasurer W.D. Elmer Smith reported that the board operated the year 1967 with a deficit of \$149.31.

Total receipts were \$5,790; including rentals \$3,389.85; donations \$1,022.48, and the balance in memberships, resale of goods, etc.

Expenditures were \$5,939.31, including fuel \$1384.69; repairs \$877.40; public utilities \$617.81,

and the balance spent on programs, world service, national council, etc.

This does not include over 1200 hours donated by board members and Y's Men in decorating, maintenance and operating program, estimated at \$3,000.

Garnet McKenzie acted as chairman for the meeting with Doug Copeland as secretary.

## Beardmore's ask minor change in sewage land agreement

A request from Beardmore and Co. to make one minor change in the agreement with the town over the transfer of land for the proposed addition to the sewage plant was endorsed by council at their last meeting.

Beardmore's asked that the area presently being used, including the sludge bed, be excluded from the lease as it was expected it would be filled up in the next two or three years. The company does not wish the land

filled up for 10 or possibly a 20 year period. The company would allow the town to use the area until it was full.

It was the only change in the agreement requested by the company which has been studying documents, easements and leases pertaining to the transfer.

The urgency of completing the transfer was emphasized so the building plan could be implemented. It will take two years after construction starts to get the new plant into operation.

## Zone chairman makes official visit

Zone chairman Cliff Richmond made his official visit to Acton Lions Club at their regular meeting last week accompanied by two members of the Brampton club.

Also in attendance were six Lions from the North Peel pride, anxious to escape from the Calton Hills. They managed to abscond with the local Leos' lion bank, a swipe which guarantees a return visit.

The zone chairman complimented the Acton club on the scope of their activities, especially on the eye bank which proved to be a real success. He also complimented secretary Bob Hall for the accuracy and faithfulness of his reports to the zone office.

Lion Murray Harrison wielded the hammer for a Chinese auction which raised \$15. for the

club's coffers. New projects were discussed, the most recent a draw on Stanley Cup tickets, convoked by Lion Dave Hunter.

The club approved the purchase of a resuscitator to be presented to the local branch of the St. John Ambulance.

Lion Ray Evelan led the club and visitors in a rousing sing song, a feature visitors at the Acton club always seem to appreciate.

### Car damaged

On January 20 a complaint was laid by Joseph John Forwell that his car had been damaged in the Dominion Hotel parking lot. Damage was estimated by Acton Police at \$550. Investigation is continuing.

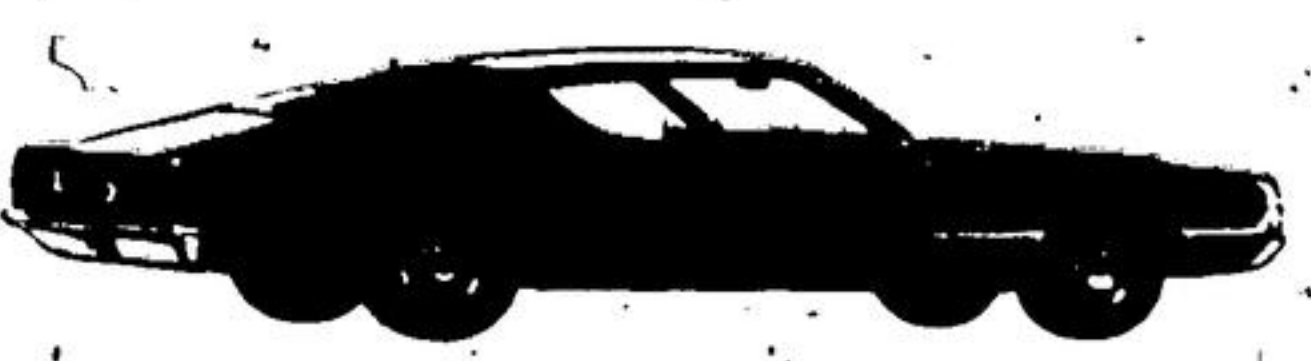


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## Over 100 couples at square dance

St. Catharines square dance club "The Swing and Whirls", were hosts at Thorold High school, Saturday, January 27, to members of Acton's "Pairs and Squares." Bill Carey of Toronto, Orphie Eason of St. Catharines and Norm Wilcox of Bramalea called to over 100 couples, for the afternoon and evening of very enjoyable dancing.

A delicious roast beef dinner was served followed by a short skit and a fashion show.

Those attending from Acton were Mr. and Mrs. J. Carpenter, Mr. and Mrs. H. Denny, Mr. and Mrs. G. Hargrave, Mr. and Mrs. C. Perry and Mr. and Mrs. S. Reed.

The following names were missed from last week's news: Mr. and Mrs. E. Whitford, Valerie Coles and Mary Jane Fogin, Bobby Townsend should have read Bobby Thompson.

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24-oz. Jar — With Pectin