

State of recreation . . .

Are there enough recreational facilities in Acton? Is the recreation program adequate?

These and other questions asked by grade XI high school students in a survey conducted at the town's three schools and from parents came up with some surprising results. The most revealing fact was that there were 55 programs listed under recreation which people were participating in. And there are others which weren't listed.

In spite of all this activity it is apparent, however, there are some deficiencies. Young people, especially, were very strong in their answers for the need of an indoor swimming pool, movies, dances, football and gym classes.

Adults favored an indoor swimming pool, tennis and a new

track at the high school, in that order.

The most surprising answer to the survey came from the public school when 21 boys suggested family billiards would be an ideal recreation.

Adults will recognize that the younger people in town and district no longer have facilities like a movie theatre and numerous public dances at their fingertips. Acton was only half the size it is now, indeed only a third, when these amusements were located in town. Since they are commercial ventures no one can be blamed for this deficiency but the public which failed to patronize them.

The survey did show that recreation is in a healthy state in town but there is no room for complacency.

Drivers poor here . . .

Canadian drivers will probably be astonished to learn their counterparts in the United States are better drivers than they are by any standard of measurement.

If Canadian death rates, based on number of vehicles, or miles driven, could be reduced to U.S. levels, about 1800 lives would be saved each year in Canada, and 400,000 injuries avoided.

A major factor in the difference between two countries with

comparable traffic conditions must be the large proportion of U. S. drivers who took driver education courses in high school, believes The Ontario Safety League. Driver education is growing rapidly in Ontario but the number is still minute compared to the U. S.

The statistics latest available from the years 1966 and 1967—point out there is something wrong with driving in Canada when it is stacked up against other western countries. Here they are:

DEATH RATE Per:	10,000 vehicles	100,000 population	100 million miles driven
Canada	7.6	26.9	8.4
U.S.A.	5.3	26.8	5.5
Sweden (best, Europe)	5.0	16.8	not available
East Germany	5.2	10.1	not available
Great Britain	5.2	14.0	6.5
France	7.0	24.6	not available
West Germany	12.6	28.3	not available
Portugal	24.8	11.1	not available
Yugoslavia (worst, Europe)	48.0	10.9	not available

Order goose . . .

Bob Cratchit would have a hard time finding that Christmas goose this year.

Of course, if you remember Dickens' A Christmas Carol, the goose existed only in the vision shown to Scrooge by the Ghost of Christmas Present. After Scrooge reformed he sent the Cratchits an immense turkey for their Christmas dinner.

Turkey is what you probably will have, too. Poultry production breaks down into about 95 per cent chickens and four per cent turkeys with the remaining one per cent consisting of ducks, geese, guinea fowl, pigeons and other birds.

So if you're planning on goose for Christmas, you'd better get your order in right now.

Off the cuff . . .

The new math may not be suited to modern needs for mathematical skills, suggests Canadian University in its report on a recent mathematics conference in Ottawa. Curt Moser, head of mathematics at Algonquin College's school of technology in Ottawa, maintained that high schools are graduating students with a low mathematics skill—they can't do things like simple interest, percentage and fraction problems even though, through some of the techniques used in the new math, they have high abstract mathematical skill.

If you are a whiz at writing poetry in French, you could make \$300 a month writing verse for greeting cards, or as the manufacturers call them now, "social expression products". The cards are already a \$55-million-a-year business, and still growing. The 250 million cards Canadians are expected to buy this Christmas season will account for 40 per cent of the \$55 million. One big worry the card-makers face is, whether the recent increase in postal rates will cut down sales of Christmas cards.



THE ERAMOSIA RIVER plunges over the mill pond dam at Eden Mills creating artistic designs with ice formations before continuing along to join the Speed in Guelph. The abundant water supply was swelled by copious autumn rains. (Staff Photo)



Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

Well, is that old Christmas spirit just bubbling inside you? Do you chuckle away with sheer, brimming love of your fellow man as you do your shopping? Are your eyes gleaming with glee as you look at your Christmas card list?

What? It isn't? You don't? They're not? What's the matter with you, anyway?

Have you organized your door-to-door carol singing group for Christmas Eve? Have you made plans for a family of eight, on welfare, to share your Christmas dinner?

You haven't? you say you grunt and bunt and sweat and curse as you stagger through the stores? Your eyes are shining with pure hatred as you look over your Christmas card list?

Welcome to the group. We're growing with increasing rapidity. One of these years, we'll have a majority, and will rise up with one might shout: "Christmas? Bah! Humbug!"

And if the current Tiny Tim, that creature one sees these days on television, shakes back his long, curly locks, opens his made-up mouth and starts warbling, "God bless us, everyone," he'll probably get it right between the eyes with one of those cast-iron Christmas tree stands that never work.

But we mustn't carp. The great day will arrive when Christmas is torn out of the grasp of the hucksters and returned to the people.

After all, Christmas is a time of good cheer. Even though much of it comes out of a croak. And after all, 'tis a season to be jolly. And most of us are jolly well sick of the whole business by the time the sacred day itself arrives.

One of the founding members of ACSA, the Anti-Christmas-Spirit-Association, was King Wenceslaus. The "good" was tacked on by the court minstrel on the explicit orders of Wenceslaus himself, who was trying to improve his image for the history books.

He looked out one night and shuddered within his ermine robes. The snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even. A great night for skiers and snow-mobile friends. But Wenceslaus was neither; and he had the gout. He saw a poor man gathering fuel, though the frost was cruel. And what he actually said was, "Get that lousy bum

Notes . . .

No wonder Christmas comes only once each year. The country would go broke if it came oftener.

Girls who have not yet snagged their man could get in touch with the R.C.M.P. They are famous for always getting their man. Not much time left. Leap year ends on December 31 at the stroke of 12.

Don't frown. Days start the slow cycle back to more daylight after Dec. 21.

off my property. He's stealing Christmas trees." And so a legend was born.

Another prominent member of ACSA was Charles Dickens. Dickens really hated Christmas, because he always had a wretched struggle getting the tree up. And when he did, his wife invariably said sweetly, "It's crooked, dear. It's leaning over."

So he wrote a sardonic parody of the whole starry-eyed Christmas mush. He cast himself as Scrooge, a jolly old gent, but one who didn't believe in Santa Claus. Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's semi-literate clerk, was stealing from the petty cash so that he could get bombed on Christmas Eve and go and watch his son, Tiny Tim, the one with the phoney limp, play his ukelele and sing for pennies at the Slap and Tickle, a sordid London pub.

In the original version, kindly old Mr. Scrooge said, "Forget it, Bob," gave him a Christmas goose, and added, realist that he was, "but the fuzzi will be around for you on Boxing Day."

Dickens' editor, however, a grasping, flint-hearted old skinfint, knew his Victorian readers would never accept such realism. He made the author re-write the story into the sloppily sentimental "A Christmas Carol," which has nauseated all ACSA members from that day to this.

Dickens got his revenge. He re-wrote the character of Scrooge as a caricature of his editor. Then he hit the punchbowl, the editor and the road. He was bitter. He disappeared until after New Year's. They found him dragging a Yule log, soaked in kerosene, into the basement of his publishers' plant.

Just a couple of examples out of thousands to show you that you are not alone. Join ACSA. No membership fee, no annual meeting. Nothing required except a resounding "HUMBBUG!" when the signal goes out.

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Photos from the past



THE FAMILY'S PRIDE — the automobile — was included in this group portrait. The people are not identified. The print was made from a thick, old glass nega-

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, December 23, 1948.

Robert McDougall, aged 19, of R.R. 1, Rockwood, was killed instantly early last Thursday morning when the bicycle he was riding crashed into a car driven by Wilbert McCutcheon, also of R.R. 1, Rockwood, on the sixth concession of Eramosa.

The new Scout clubhouse is entirely sheeted in. Half the north side of the roof has been shingled. Ice on the roof delayed the roofing of the east half of the roof. Those helping included Theron Jones, Bill Coon, Ellis Rognvaldson, Sam Snow, George Ritchie, Bill Benson, Jackie Davidson, Dave Dills and Charlie Wilson. Ray Mason and Grant Allan also assisted.

The show came in plenty of time for Christmas in this district and it added a needed spirit and impetus to the Christmas season.

Master James Turnbull, aged three and a half, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Turnbull of R.R. 1, Campbellville, passed away Friday evening in Milton Private Hospital. His mother had put him to bed for an afternoon sleep and while the mother was away at work, the child climbed out of bed and took an overdose of ABS pills.

The natural ice arenas have not had a very early season this year. However, the artificial surfaces in the district are numerous enough to give all the opportunity for early winter skating and hockey.

Never since 1872, when an Acton band started blowing for Acton, did any group appear more smartly dressed or provide better music, than did the Acton Boys' and Girls' Band last Sunday evening under the leadership of Mr. C. W. Mason. In their sparkling new uniforms, they made a fine looking group of 30 young musicians.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, December 26, 1918.

Esqueusing Council's members received for their services during the year the following sums: Alex. Joe, Reeve, \$135.80; J. L. Standish, Deputy Reeve, \$105.35; John Bingham, \$108.00; J. Elliott, \$86.80; W. J. L. Hampshire, \$80.50.

The record-breaking turkey of the Christmas trade was sold at McEnery and Evans meat market on Saturday. It weighed 30 pounds and at the prevailing price of 40 cents cost the customer \$12.00.

The sum of \$216.50 was paid to farmers who had built wire fences on the highways of Esqueusing during the year as a bonus by the Township Council.

Pansies in full bloom were picked in Moorecroft garden on Monday, Dec. 23.

Miss Catharine Roszell left a couple of weeks ago for Regina, Sask., to visit friends there.

Salt and Pepper

by hartley coles

Christmas will be tinged with sadness for me this year. A good friend, whom I've never seen or talked with has died.

Known worldwide as an author and philosopher, my friend's name was Thomas Merton. He was over in Thailand when he touched a faulty fan cord and was electrocuted. I became friendly with him through his books starting with his best known, The Seven Storey Mountain, a spiritual odyssey of his own life.

He was a man of peace and tranquillity, but paradoxically lived in the midst of strife and turmoil most of his life. He sowed some 'wild oats' in a manner which few of us could afford or will ever have the opportunity to emulate.

Son of a well known English painter and an American mother, Merton attended school in France, England and the United States, including those well known universities, Cambridge and Columbia. He rubbed shoulders with the elite of New York society and famous people in the arts and letters.

At one time in his life, fed up with the emptiness of his life, he tried Communism as a panacea for the ills of conscience which gnawed at him. Free to indulge his appetites and with an income to match, Merton didn't hesitate to try anything which seemed to give pleasure.

He describes the burning issues of the day during the '30's in his biography. Students, would you believe, motivated by the communist party organizers, picketed and staged mass campus demonstrations chanting "Books for battleships!" and "No more war!" Familiar ring, eh? War, according to the Communist party line, was an exclusively capitalist amusement.

The line changed when the Spanish civil war broke out! It then became popular to enlist in the Loyalist cause who were being

Mr. Fred Secord is spending the holidays with his brother, John, at Orillia. Mr. and Mrs. Logan of Paisley, were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Switzer during the week.

Mr. and Mrs. Adam Hall and three children were up from Toronto for the Beardmore Christmas tree and were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Neil McDonald.

Married, Mainprize-McDonald — At Wyvale on Thursday, December 26, 1918, by Rev. W. McEwen, Harry Mainprize, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Mainprize, of Acton, to Martha, daughter of Alexander McDonald.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, December 21, 1893.

Bread is selling in town for eight cents. The sheds at the brick church above Acton were levelled by the weight of snow after Friday's storm. The train service was badly disarranged. Telegraph wires were down in all directions.

Fire on Tuesday night considerably damaged the japanning and polishing rooms at the Raymond sewing machine factory in Guelph. The exact amount of the loss cannot be ascertained but it is fully covered by insurance.

George Havill has been appointed clerk and John Lawson, V.S.C., bailiff of the Fourth Division Court of Halton. The appointment of new officers was necessary owing to the resignation of James H. Matthews and William Hemstreet.

Russia has declined France's offer of a naval station in the Mediterranean, as Admiral Avelan told the czar he could not guarantee the loyalty of his officers and men if they were to be permitted to visit French ports regularly.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Canadian Champion, Milton, December 17, 1868.

Milton, as usual at this season of the year, is astir with the Municipal Elections. Parties are so nearly balanced that there is always a pleasant uncertainty which adds a zest to the contests. We are happy to perceive that the contests are likely to be conducted in the best of humor, and with little personal rancor. Men should be selected according to their merit for the various offices, but in many cases it is invidious to distinguish between gentlemen equally meritorious and fitted for the office to which they aspire. We know of several instances of this nature, and where the qualifications, personal friendship, or party preference will decide the choice of the electors.



represented by some sections of the U.S. press as saviors of "democracy." The switch, completed in the twinkling of an eye, completely disenchanted peacenik Merton. He went back to the dissolute life, convinced it made more sense.

The fruitlessness of his life depressed him, however, and eventually his nervous constitution collapsed under the strain of contemporary civilization. He became a hypochondriac, obsessed with his own ills, imaginary and real, and in his confusion looked for a port in which to weather the storm.

Eventually he found peace of mind. After much soul-searching and some teaching experience at various colleges, he entered the Trappists, an order of monks who hie rigidly to a simple, frugal life. It was his cup of tea.

As a postulant the inspiration to write began to flower. He turned out several books including some magnificent poetry. Ties with Canada included a brother, John Paul, who joined the R.C.A.F. during the last war and was killed on a bombing mission. The poem Thomas Merton wrote to commemorate his brother's death was one of the most beautiful of his early works. The first two lines:

"Sweet brother, if I do not sleep
My eyes are flowers for your tomb . . ." completely captivated me. I read everything Merton wrote that I could get my hands on after his first book. His writing cuts through to the heart of the matter and points out many of the absurd things we consider necessary in life.

Merton was on a mission to Thailand when he was accidentally killed. What a tragic ending for a man who searched all his life for peace and wrote so well.

Thomas Merton is dead. But his ideas and philosophy will live on.

I'll miss him. So will millions of his readers.