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## Chatting...

with M. H. B.

• **BETWEEN THINKING** about the revival of outdoor skating rinks, and reading Gwen Clarke's book of history on Halton County, I'm inclined to be historically minded these days. From time to time it has been mentioned that the original minutes of Esquesing Council would be interesting to see and write about. So I finally betook myself to the Esquesing township council chamber in the Stewarttown Community Hall, where township clerk K. C. Lindsay was kind enough to allow me to study the treasured book...

• **THE BOOK ITSELF**, dating back to 1821, is in amazingly good condition. True, the paper is yellowing a little, but the ink of the longhand notes is still completely legible in the old-fashioned slanting penmanship, and the paper gives no sign of disintegrating.

The notes, written by the first township clerk, James Fraser, reveal that in the year 1821, Stewarttown was larger than Georgetown. A little later on I can give you some surprising statistics about Stewarttown as written in the Historical Atlas of Halton in 1877. For the moment, however, I'll tell you a little more about these old minutes of Esquesing...

• **AT THE TIME** the first entries were made in the minute book, the total population of Esquesing was 424. That figure included Acton and Georgetown as well as Stewarttown. The total figure was composed of 144 males over the age of 16 years and 90 under 16 years of age, and 102 females past their 16th year and 88 females under 16 years. Just by way of comparison you might like to know that today the population of Esquesing township alone, that is not including Georgetown and Acton, is 4847, and the whole population of Esquesing totals something over the 12,000 mark. Incidentally too, I noticed that in 1822 the population of Erin stood at 43...

The system of governing the township was much different from today. When the first notes were written, the township was divided into divisions of a sq. q mile or mile and a half. One man called a pathmaster was in charge of each. In order to keep up the roads, every farmer had to do so much actual work in proportion to his assessment...

• **TO GET A COMPREHENSIVE** picture of how the county and the province were governed at that time you have to go back to 1788 when what is now the province of Ontario was made into its first municipal organization by Lord Dorchester. His proclamation divided the province into four districts namely, Luxenburg, Mckenburgh, Nassau and Hesse...

The Provincial Act of 1792 continued these four divisions, but called them Eastern, Midland, Home and Western. Each district was to have a gaol and court house. Halton formed a part of the Home District, and of course these districts were subsequently subdivided several times again...

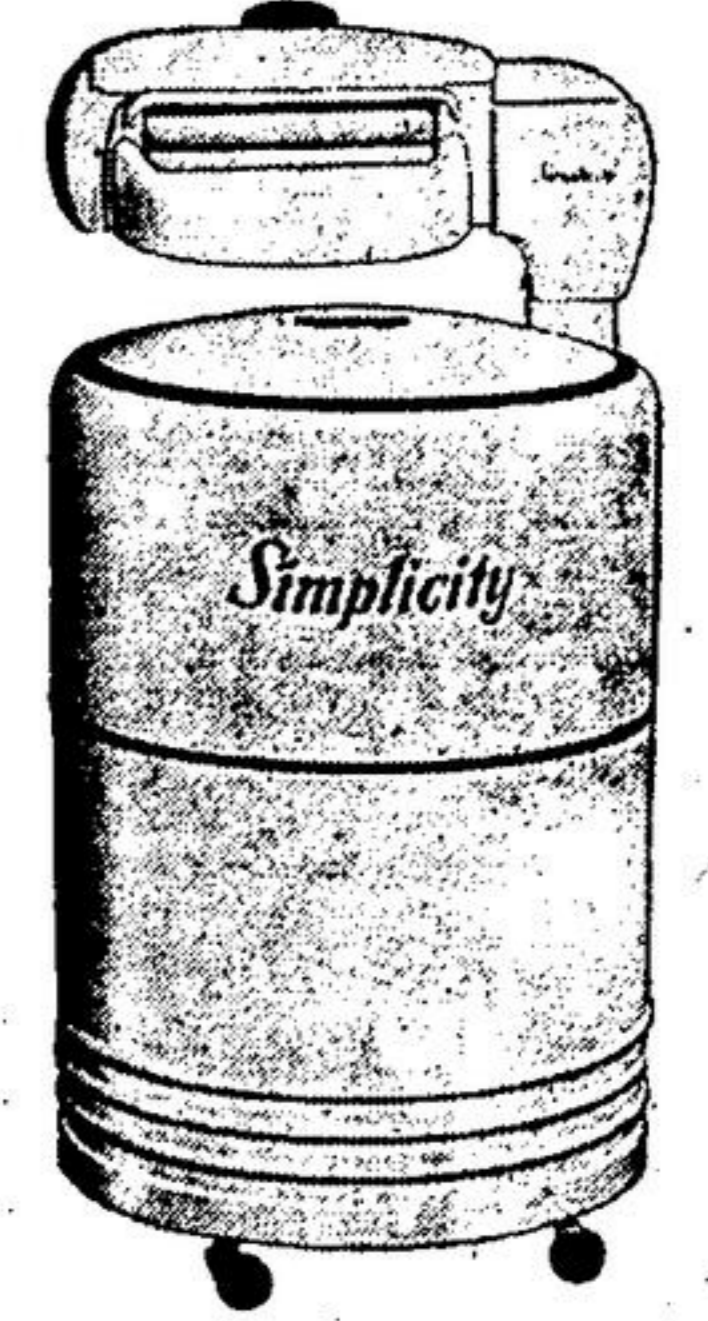
The original minutes of the township just got up to the year 1849 when the Municipal Act setting up our present form of municipal government was passed. Until then the township was governed by the Justices in session at the district court house.

• **SOME OF THE NAMES** of men holding the first municipal offices in the township are still familiar to us today. The assessors were Joseph Standish and Thomas Harbour. Thomas Fyfe was tax collector and Charles Kennedy and John Stewart were the town wardens. The six pathmasters were John McTavish, Donald McKinnon, James Hume, Christopher Cook, William Micklejohn and Christian Barnes...

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• **Meanwhile, pour 1 1/4 cups** evaporated milk into refrigerator freezer tray. Freeze till crystals form sides to 3/4" depth. Turn into chilled bowl and beat until still.

• **Beat in 1 tsp.** grated lemon rind and 3/4 cup lemon juice. Gradually beat in 1 cup sugar, then the partially thickened jelly. Beat until mixture forms soft peaks.

• **Chill, folding** occasionally, until mixture holds its shape. Spoon into trough in cake. Replace top slice. Frost cake with remaining mixture. Chill till firm.

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In addition to these officials there were always two or three pound keepers appointed yearly to look after strayed animals, as well as several fence viewers. Apparently the straying of cattle and other farm animals was a major problem in those days. But they had their own ways of meeting the difficulty, according to the records in the minute book. Every farmer had his animals ear-marked, literally, that is. And all these ear marks were registered in the township records...

• **SOME OF THE** ear marks were quite original. For instance Samuel Kennedy of Esquesing ear-marked his hogs and horned cattle with a half-penny in the right ear and two slits in the left ear. Other ear-marked identifications listed in the year 1828 were: a half crop off right side of right ear — a tip cut off right ear — left ear cropped and one slit in same — a swallow fork and a half-penny in the left ear — left ear off and a slit in right ear. But I believe that in spite of their best precautions, cattle and horse rustlers plagued the farmers of those early days...

• **ALL MONEY LISTED** in the minutes is in pounds, shillings and pence. In 1838 the township of Esquesing spent 93 pounds on the upkeep of roads...

• **BY 1828 THE POPULATION** of the township had increased to 1066. There were 4211 acres of cultivated land and 24,457 acres of uncultivated land. Mr. Lindsay, our present township clerk, said he didn't know where the rest of the township was because there are actually a total of 70,000 acres in the township. Probably the clerk had just made an error in entering. There were three merchants shops, 3 grist mills, and six sawmills. At that time there were 5 "framed" houses here and 6 built of

squared timbers. By "squared" timbers they meant that the logs were squared with a broad axe instead of flattened only on the top and bottom. The number of ordinary log houses was not listed...

• **TAKES A LITTLE** stretching of the imagination to realize that is the picture of our thriving populous township as it was 130 odd years ago, doesn't it? Makes us realize, too, how precious those early records are...

• **THE ANIMAL KINGDOM** in Esquesing in 1828 consisted of 49 horses, 294 oxen, 399 cows, and 207 cattle under four years and over two...

### Avro, Scotch Block W.I. Early Donors to Hospital

The first permanent gift received by Milton District Hospital from an industrial group was a cheque for \$2,000 from Avro Aircraft Employees Welfare Fund this week. In the letter acknowledging the cheque the chairman of the fund, Duncan McCallum, requested on behalf of his committee that \$1,500 of this grant be used to provide a double room and furniture, while the balance of \$500 be earmarked to buy an oxygen tent.

In acknowledging the cheque the honorary campaign co-chairman of the new hospital, Roger Ptolemy, expressed the thanks of the hospital board and assured the chairman of the fund that the gifts would be permanently marked with suitable plaques. He asked that the Board's thanks be communicated to the employees of Avro. Other clubs and firms have already indicated their intention of making similar presentations to the Milton District Hospital. The Scotch Block Women's Institute at Milton has donated \$500 to furnish a single room in the new hospital, the first gift to come from such an organization.

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