

Centuries Old Tradition In Sheriff Frank's Job

The last man to hang in Halton County dropped to oblivion in 1870.

Hopefully there won't be another hanging in the county— for if there is it will mean a policeman or prison guard has been slain—but in the event of an execution, Halton County Sheriff Andrew Frank is ready.

It's the sheriff's job to set up the execution.

The sheriff gets in touch with a certain official in Toronto who gets in touch with the hangman and a date is set.

Death Cell
It's the sheriff's job to measure the man who waits in the death cell and then specify the dimensions of the scaffold. The sheriff supervises as the scaffold is erected outside the cell.

And it's the sheriff who arranges for a doctor and a minister to be present and then, afterwards, sees that the man at the end of the rope is buried.

Not a pleasant task, but clearly one of the duties of that ancient office.

Frank, the county's ninth sheriff said he's glad he has never in his eleven years of office had to assist in a hanging, but, he added, in the event he would not flinch at the duty.

Sheriff Quit
Apparently not all sheriffs have the necessary emotional fibre for the task. After one execution around 1850, the sheriff of the time is said to have quit his job, said Frank.

Sheriff Frank could add little to the identity of the official Ontario hangman.

"Only one man in Ontario knows who the provincial hangman is," he said, "and I don't know who that one man is."

"All the sheriff knows is that in the event of a conviction and death sentence he would contact an official in Toronto who in turn would probably contact another official before the hangman is reached."

This mysterious figure who places the noose around the neck of the condemned man and releases the trapdoor has been reported elsewhere as being a professional man. Not even his wife is believed to know her husband's sideline.

If there were to be another hanging in Halton County, said Sheriff Frank, the scaffold would go up in an enclosure outside the county courthouse. Nearby are the graves of two

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murderers executed in the 1850's.

Mr. Frank, of Milton, formerly of Nassagaweya township in North Halton, was a real estate broker and in the building trade before being appointed by the lieutenant governor to the full-time sheriff's job in 1958.

Church Elder
A golfer at Halton Heights and elder of St. Paul's United Church in Milton, Sheriff and Mrs. Frank have three married daughters and a son who attends York University.

He is assisted in his duties in the county building by Deputy Sheriff R. M. (Mac) Sprowl of Acton who has held that position for the past five years.

An Equestrian school board member, Sprowl, married with two daughters, was a farmer before moving to the county building full time. He was one of two Canadians one year who received a Nutfield scholarship in agriculture and studied at Cambridge University in England. Mr. Sprowl is an elder at Knox Presbyterian Church in Acton.

Both sheriff and deputy are Canadians from way back, they noted with pride, Frank's ancestors came to Halton County in 1837 and the Sprowls arrived in the county in 1829.

Both men enjoy their work, the duties, the responsibilities and the very fact of the antiquity of the sheriff's office.

Five Centuries
It dates back five centuries before 1066, noted Sheriff Frank. Early Saxon writings refer to the sheriff as the chief magistrate of the shire.

The law in use in Canada today, he said, the duties of the sheriff and the jury system are almost identical with that which the Normans brought with them to England those 900 years ago.

Practically the only change, the sheriff said, is that now seven men are required on a Grand Jury instead of the previous 13.

Selects Jurors
It is the sheriff's job to select Grand and Petit juries.

The Grand Jury is that body that goes through the evidence surrounding a police charge to determine if the case warrants a trial in the high court. If it does, the Grand Jury returns what is known as a True Bill, otherwise it's a No Bill.

There are four county court sittings a year, the sheriff explained, two general sessions of the peace heard before juries, generally beginning the first week in December and again in June, and two non-jury sittings held at intervals between the jury trials.

The Accused
The accused person coming up for trial elects at the magistrate's hearing whether they want a judge and jury or just a judge to hear the case.

Halton County Court is currently presided over by Judge Alan B. Sprague of Oakville.

The Supreme Court sits in the same court house the first week in January (winter sittings) and then again in September (fall sittings) with juries present both times, plus two non-jury sittings at intervals.

These trials are presided over by various circuit judges from Toronto.

The sheriff is responsible for guarding, feeding and (if convicted) transportation to prison of all accused persons on trial in the county courthouse.

Court Constable
Senior court constable William Randall, and his 14 men, plus one woman constable, Mrs. Clifford Houston, take no chances in handling the many criminal types who come into the building, says the sheriff.

"We have always used great precaution and maximum security," he said, "that is why we have had no incidents of violence while these people have been in our custody."

He added: "We take pride in never having a display of violence or an escape in the courtroom area. We have always had adequate constables."

And they get a 'rough bunch' of humanity in that county building, noted Deputy Sheriff Sprowl.

Murderers, thieves, thugs, hoodlums have all passed through the Halton County Court and the sheriff, his deputy and constables have been there to guard them, feed them, and if necessary arrange for their transportation to federal penitentiary in Kingston.

"We must look after the juries, too," added Sheriff Frank.

Murder Trials
Last year, he recalled, during two separate capital murder trials the juries had to be detained in a motel every minute they were not in court until the completion of the trials.

The juryman were transported to and from court every day and kept 'under guard' at all times. This was to deny them

any communication with the outside world until a verdict had been given.

Another time, recalled the sheriff, on the very last day of a three-week civil case a jurymen broke out in red measles.

To have sent the man home would have meant dismissing the entire jury, calling another and beginning the trial over again, the sheriff said.

That struck Sheriff Frank as a horrible fate for all concerned so 'I doped him up with aspirin and asked him to hang on.'

The day and the trial came to a close, and then, only then, did the jurymen go home!

ROBES FOR LAST TIME
Georgetown Reeve William Hunter is given a hand by Halton County deputy clerk Clare McKay as he dons his Warden's robes to preside at the last county council meeting of his term. It's likely Halton's next Warden will be either AUSTIN Ledwith of Milton, ALLAN Day of Oakville, or GEORGE CURRIE of Esquesing.

Season's Best
At this joyful time of year I would like to take this opportunity in wishing each and everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

CHRIS A. SCHOUTEN
AUCTIONEER - MILTON

Merry Christmas
To All Our Friends
AND A SINCERE THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRONAGE
ROBERT R. HAMILTON
OPTOMETRIST

SEASON'S GREETINGS
— and —
THANKS
FOR THE FINE SUPPORT GEORGETOWN AND DISTRICT PEOPLE HAVE GIVEN US THIS YEAR
GEORGETOWN GIRLS PIPE BAND

Joy to the World
CHRIST, THE SAVIOR, IS REBORN
HALTON-PEEL BUILDING MAINTENANCE
BOB FOKKENS 877-4092

White Gifts to Help Make Happier Holiday
Sunday, December 8th was White Gift Sunday at Norval United Church. During the professional hymn of 'We Three Kings the Sunday School children came forward and placed their gifts at the front of the church.

Sunday School pupils assisting in the church service were Sam Lagerquist, Terry Laidlaw, Allen Johnson, and Gordon Lyons.

The Junior Choir sang special numbers during the service.

The gifts were delivered to downtown Toronto for distribution among needy families in the city.

This Sunday was also observed by the donation of one day's pay for the hungry of the world. This is a special project of the United Church of Canada to raise extra funds for the needy of the world. It is still not too late to make your donation.

— Mrs. Ed McLean

Merry Christmas
AND BEST WISHES FROM
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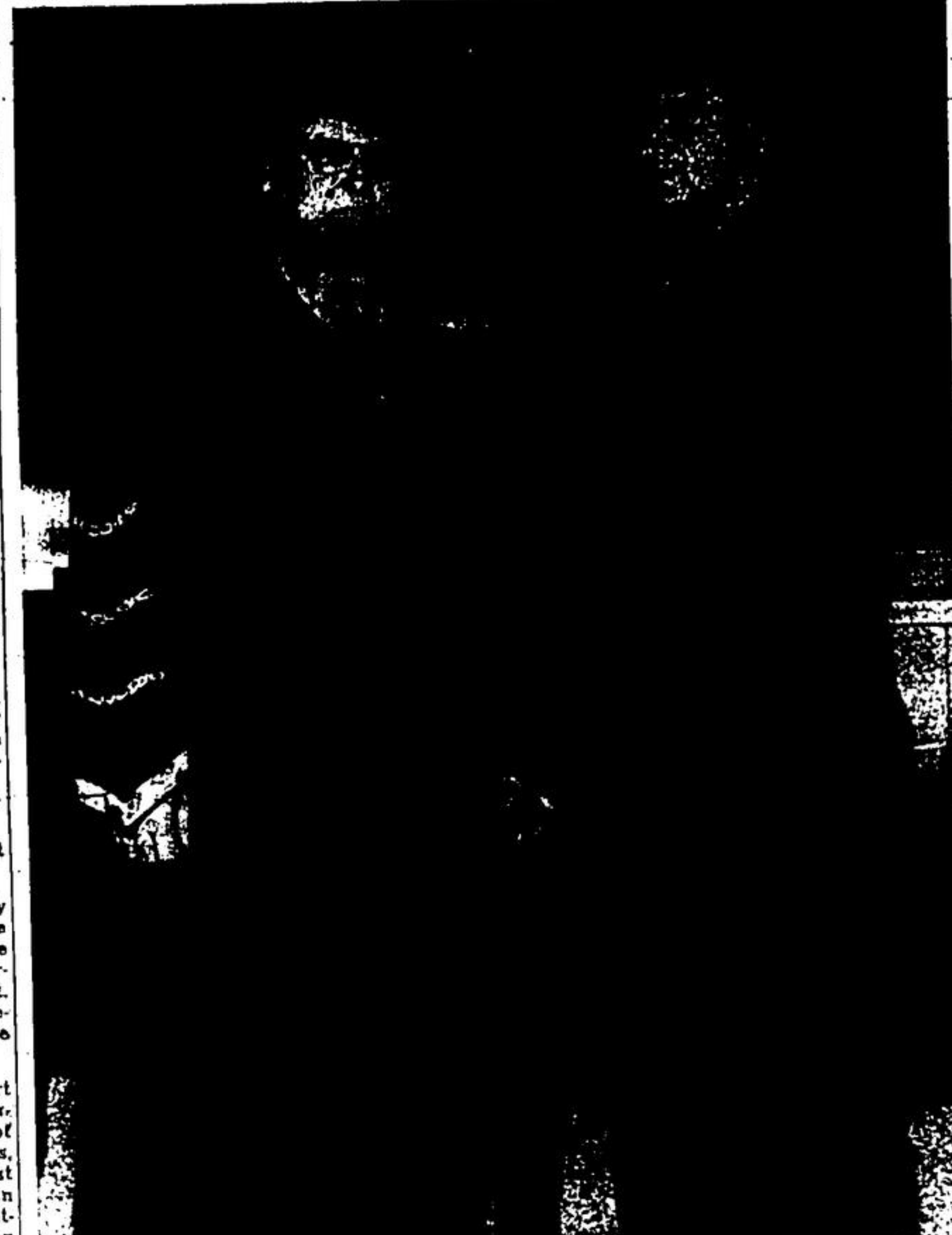
May the Star of Bethlehem lead us to harmony.

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... may it bring peace to a troubled world

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Peace on Earth
BORN IS THE KING OF ISRAEL.
LET US REJOICE IN THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS.
GOLDEN FISH & CHIPS
38 Main Street North
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TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF OUR MANY CUSTOMERS, WE EXTEND SINCERE GREETINGS
FROM THE STAFF AND MANAGEMENT
ANDREW MURRAY MOTORS
45 Mountainview Road Georgetown
UNDER THE WATER TOWER



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And to all, thanks for your wonderful patronage!
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