

# Approvals good news . . .

We were certainly pleased to hear that the town has been granted approval to proceed with two of the major works planned for this year - storm sewers on Bower Avenue and renovations at the corner of Mill and Park Ave.

This was good news but too late for the editorial. Nevertheless, we still think our point was valid. There was a hold-up, although accusations of foot dragging certainly couldn't be pinned on the town fathers.

conversation generated about a subject.

We have always found the mayor, the clerk and all members of council most helpful when we asked for information about municipal projects. We appreciate the 100 per cent effort they put into their positions. However, we also feel there is a communication gap which could be bridged easily if more information was available on some subjects.

Our point was that council should prod the professional slackers more - or move their business elsewhere. Councillor Greer said the same thing at the last regular meeting of council.

We have been accused of being too hasty in a recent editorial criticizing council over the lack of any construction activity on these projects. Subsequently we learned at a council meeting that much of the hold-up was in the engineer's office and the mayor and council are as distressed as we were over the lack of activity.

We certainly do not have all the information available to councillors who attend committee meetings, where these subjects are discussed. But like the general public we must base our comments on what is done or being done, not on the amount of

We can understand the reluctance to have everything debated fully at regular meetings, especially the mundane decisions that fall to council's lot, but there are some fellows out here who are really interested in how the town's business is coming along - principally because it is ours, too.



STUCK WITH SEVEN puppies and no takers, Jimmy Bannon, left, recruited two friends, Glen Hilts, centre, and Reggie Coomde, right, and canvassed from door to door in the hope he could find them a home. So far the boys have found homes for three of the pups but they still have three more. (In case you are interested, Jimmy's phone number is 853-2284) - (Photo by Ray Saitz)



## Sugar and Spice by bill smiley

By doing a little mathematics, I've come to the conclusion that I must be related to half the population of Canada.

I've just received a small booklet compiled by my uncle, Ivan C. Thomson of Ottawa. It sets forth the genealogy of my maternal ancestors in Canada.

Some people find their ancestors a huge bore. Others are afraid of skeletons in the closet. I find ancestors fascinating, as I try to picture them, think of the incredibly difficult lives they led, and wonder what characteristics I and my children have received from them.

My uncle's booklet is no high-colored romance. It deals in facts: births, deaths, names, property titles. But among the pages is the occasional laconic comment which makes me wish I could leap back into the 19th century and explore further.

My maternal great-grandparents were certainly not of the aristocracy. He was a ship's carpenter, and that's one reason he, Walter Thomson and she, Margaret Farrell, his new bride, set out from Donegal, Ireland, for St. John, New Brunswick, where there was a ship-building industry. He was 20, she 19. It was 1834.

Within a few years, with three children, they moved to Upper Canada, because

Walter had heard of work to be obtained in the building of slides on the Upper Ottawa River.

These slides were built for the lumbering business which was skimming the cream from the stands of wonderful pine in the area. The purpose of the slides was to allow the cribs and rafts of square timber to bypass rapids. The timber was floated down the river, eventually to reach Quebec. Some of the great rafts were half a mile long.

In 1847, great-grandfather Thomson was appointed Slide Master of Grand Calumet Island in the Ottawa River. He held the position for more than 30 years, to be succeeded by his son William, my grandfather, who was to reign until the last raft of square timber came down the river in 1910.

That's the background. My mother's family attended a one-room school, boarded the teacher for \$45 a year. My uncle Ivan had a good job. He went to the school early in fall and winter, and lit the fire. He got \$3 a year. My grandfather got \$1 a day for his government position as Slide Master. Pay ceased when the navigation season ended, so the Master had to farm as well. There were ten in the family, and from what I've heard, they had a happy life on the island.

As a child, I saw the old homestead high on a hill overlooking the mighty Ottawa, and was thrilled.

But as I said, while the facts in the book are interesting, it's the little asides that inflame the curiosity.

The original family of Walter Thomson was eight children. They produced, among them, exactly 50 more Thomsons. Today, eight might produce 16.

Anna married James Paul. They had four children. "She also raised Johnny Robertson." Now there's a story in itself. Who was Johnny? Why did she raise him? What became of him?

John (Mountain Jack) was a timber cruiser and a real bruiser in the lumberjack clashes of the times. "He had a terrible temper and was known up and down the Ottawa River as a scrapper." He died at 91, a pretty ripe age for a brawler who also sired 15 children in two marriages.

Catherine married George Kemp who was very fond of liquor. No other comment, except naming their children, with the last thus: "Jason was drowned at Tomuskaming".

Another son, Walter, had nine children. My grandfather William had ten. A son James had eleven. The youngest daughter, Jane, must have realized that even such a good thing as Thomsons could go too far, produced only two.

Anyone who can multiply can see why I have so many relations. The original two had grown to 60 in two generations. Heaven knows how many the 60 produced.

But I'd really like to go back and talk to some of the old-timers. They were virile people in more ways than one.

But no - Daughter One had never heard of bonnie Annie Laurie. I was afraid to ask if she ever heard of the gal who wrote it - Scotland's immortal bard Lady John Scott, whoever she is.

So dear friends and gentle hearts there is a genuine musical generation gap - in our house, anyway - and we intend to remedy it with generous doses of humming.

If you happen to be passing our house at the height of the heat wave and you hear some mighty humming, don't be alarmed. It is hereby the family musical hour.

The tune might be Annie Laurie in the event you don't recognize it.

CALL ME an old fogie, deadbeat, turned off small conservative or anything you want, but don't go for the Ontario government's decision to lower the drinking age to 18.

That decision means two teenagers in our house can now legally enter all the beverage rooms and bars they desire. I'd far rather be fetching them from some malt shop or coffee house than traipsing in some beverage room or bar.

I don't think most teenagers are mature enough to drink at 18. I know I wasn't and despite all the propaganda to the contrary I don't believe most of today's crop are either. There's enough problems for most of them to handle without adding alcoholic ones.

Vote at 18 - Yes! - but bars, as far as I'm concerned, an unqualified NO.

Yes, we can agree with the ratepayer who says the town should make sure its own weeds are cut before ordering others to cut theirs, but much of the weed problem could be overcome if residents didn't stop at their own property lines. If we all cut weeds in front and around our own properties it would take much of the burden off the work force and certainly the town would be a tidier place in which to live. Tax money set aside for weed cutting could go to other useful purposes.

Speaking of weeds, have you noticed the condition of the school creek where it flows past the Centennial Library? It is rapidly being choked with weeds and the course of the stream has taken new directions near the school bridge, creating a loop that threatens the original stream bed. The appearance of the library, one of Acton's beauty spots, isn't helped by the bedraggled look of the stream, nor of the flotsam and jetsam the small pool near the bridge seems to collect from litterbugs.

Perhaps you also noticed where Fergus will inaugurate a door-to-door letter carrier service on September 1. Surely Acton must be nearing the requirements for such a service since the two towns are almost equal in size. Perhaps it is something the Chamber of Commerce could push, although we have heard residents in places where the service exists wish they could go back to picking up mail at the post office. They miss meeting friends and acquaintances there.

Halton East M.P. Jim Snow's survey included a question on regional government. While 1,200 said they were in favor of regional government, 1100 were not in favor and almost 800 people were undecided. The majority - 1,800 as opposed to 650 - voted for a Halton only preference against a Peel-Halton union.

Beardmore and Co.'s decision to take fire calls on the weekend from

plant boiler room is a good example of town-company co-operation. The move will allow firefighters normally on call to take weekends off and the company has a staff on there 24 hours a day so they can easily handle it. The agreement was handled through the good graces of Mayor Les Duby and Beardmore president and general manager Norm Braida.

We congratulate high school students and the parks board for their efforts to put ducks, geese and swans Fairy Lake. Now we hope the fowl are accorded the proper respect and left alone to pursue their own devices. It will be up to residents to keep their eye on the fowl to see they are protected.

Happy holidays if you are on, taken or are contemplating a vacation during July and August.



## Salt and Pepper by hartley coles

I have frequently in this column scoffed at the notion there is a genuine generation gap observing it has been my experience that people may be old or young, or even in between, but they are all basically the same.

And that may well be. But I'm afraid I'm going to have to retract some of my sage observations after a piffing incident which happened at our house Monday night.

It all started with a shower which my distaff side - wife, mother-in-law and daughter - were planning for a recently married niece. They were in the midst of selecting suitable games for the ladies, young marrieds and hoping they'll be asked gals, who would attend, when they ran across one about naming the girl in a song.

For instance, the games leader would say: "Who's name fits this song?"

"I'm goin' to Alabama with the banjo on my knee"

Everyone hollers back - "Susanna".

Things were going along pretty good with daughter naming those gals as if she had been born in the 19th century. Songs by George M. Cohan, Stephen Foster and a few old Al Jolson made famous.

Then came the phrases: Maxwellton's leaves are bonnie. When early falls the dew. And twas there that . . .

Fill in the gap!

Daughter was stumped. Never heard of it, she said, with the air of someone who was having their leg pulled.

Wife blurted it right out. You mean you don't know "Annie Laurie"?

Mother-in-law followed suit. My mouth fell wide open. Didn't know Annie Laurie?

What enormous gap had we left in her musical education which includes such classics as Otis Redding bleeding Blood, Sweat and Tears - Joe Cocker and His Mad Pup and Englishmen and the smooth tones of Danglebird Pufflesqueak crooning the latest ballads?

Surely she was putting us on. Come on girl, admit it. You were just giving old ma and pa and grandma the gears.

Never heard of Annie Laurie? You might as well say you never ever heard of Guy Lombardo and his Spoiled Canadians or Freddie Tenagarden and his sax, or the Grenadier Guards Band belting out Around the Marble Arch.

## 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, July 19, 1951.

A building boom to the estimated extent of more than three-quarters of a million dollars is sweeping Acton as public and private projects are racing to completion. This includes the \$227,000 public school addition, a \$41,000 road improvement contract, the \$425,000 sewerage system, a 4,000 water pumping station and the installation of the new Mill St. lighting facilities. Private individuals are constructing additional houses in new sections of the town and garages are also being erected. Workmen start this week on the improvements scheduled for Mill and Main Sts. No. 7 Highway is being resurfaced east of Acton.

Very few people take a look, but Acton's Pioneer cemetery is taken care of, with the grass cut, and flowers planted. In Acton it is one man who tends the plots - W. J. O. Oakes, Knox Ave.

Paraders on the Glorious Twelfth were soaked by a downpour. The district parade was in Brampton.

Acton Citizens' Band played a concert in the Wartime Housing under the direction of kinsman Perrott. Concerts will be held in various parts of the town.

There are now over 70 members in the Beardmore Recreation club to play tennis. The dressing houses at the park have been rebuilt and are in constant use these hot days.

The power was off twice this week. Roxey Horn Yesterday with Judy Holloway, best Best Actress of the Year award.

## 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, July 21, 1921.

The entrance class of Miss Minnie Z. Bennett of the Acton public school have again this year sustained the reputation of the class. Every candidate who wrote passed the examinations for entrance to High School. Of the 22 who passed 18 secured honors. The highest three in standing were Ivy Precious, Helen Cox and Clara Savage. Miss Bennett's pupils are Clarence Babcock, Alfred Bishop, Beatrice Blair, Ernest Coles, Olive Cooper, Marguerite Costello, Helen Cox, Ray Gamble, Ralph Henderson, Willie Holloway, Joe Hurst, Roy Johnston, Telford Kenney, Dora Lambert, Helen

## Free Press back issues

McDonald, Hector McDonald, Florence Mills, Ivy Precious, Harvey Rawson, Wilrose Reid, Clara Savage and Jennie Wiggins.

The outside pupils who passed in the School Section were John Wallace, S.S. 2, Nassagaweya; Fred Bard, Lena McAlpine, S.S. 5, Nassagaweya; Ruth Carnochan, Christian Frank, Wallace Lasby, Jean Sayers, Ettie Twigger, Margaret Wilson - S.S. 7, Nassagaweya; William Kelly, S.S. 8 Nassagaweya; Ada Nellis, S.S. 9, Nassagaweya.

Following is a list of the successful candidates, students of Acton high school, who passed the Entrance to Normal Schools and Lower School examinations - Ida Beswick, Laird Dancy, Vera Hurst, Donald Kennedy, Jean Kennedy, Jordan Lawson, Rose McEvoy, Marie Mowat, Martha Orr, Viola Rumbley.

Council accepted the tender of Fred Blow for the contract for beating the new shoe factory.

Miss Laura Wiles was suddenly seized with appendicitis and was successfully operated on.

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Milton team came up Saturday and the first baseball match of the season was played. The visitors won out with a score of 8 to 4. The game was rather slow.

Messrs. J. W. Kennedy and Son have opened their new hardware, tinware and plumbing store in the premises formerly occupied by Kenney Bros.

The annual banquet of the Epworth League was served to about 60. The very able President for the past six years, Miss M. Z. Bennett was presented with a morocco bound copy of the church hymn book.

## 75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, July 18, 1896.

The celebration of the glorious Twelfth in Acton on Monday reminded old settlers of the monster demonstrations held here between thirty and forty years ago, when Acton was headquarters for Orangism for a large district. With the death and removal of a number of prominent members in those early days, local interest in the orange and purple was allowed to lapse and for more than thirty years Acton has seen no celebration beyond the annual walk of the local lodge to the depot en route to some outside point. This year's celebration met the most sanguine expectations of King Willie's admirers.

About ten o'clock the visiting lodges began to assemble. A special train brought lodges from Milton, Georgetown and other points with the Milton Brass Band and a life and drum band. Acton Cornet Band met them at the station and others thronged in from east and west.

Acton was very creditably decorated with four large arches spanning Mill and Main Sts. and a fifth at the entrance to the park. Flags and bunting were displayed in profusion. After the parade there were speeches in the park from a pavilion built for the occasion. The speaking was eloquent. Col. Kerns said he did not think Orangism had outlived its usefulness.

To their credit be it said the members of the Orange order who congregated were as sober and orderly a gathering as was ever seen. The oldest Orangeman was Robert Mills of Acton who is in his 96th year and was initiated in Ireland 80 years ago.

Roman Catholic citizens were as active in the erection of arches as the Orangemen, working harmoniously side by side as in their everyday work as shopmates.