



Mild, isn't it!!

Photo by Wendy Thomson

New Year, new town, centennial

When the old year makes way for the new on Monday night it carries double significance for residents of Acton.

It marks the end of the town as a self-governed municipality and the entry into a new union with Essex and Georgetown as the town of Halton Hills. Ironically it also ushers in centennial year as the community celebrates 100 years of incorporation.

Settlers arrived in that part of Essex which became Acton in the 1820's but it wasn't until 1873 the community was incorporated as a village with Reeve W. H. Storey as first reeve. Reeve Storey was head of the Storey Glove Co. and lived in the stately home now occupied by the Rumley-Shoemaker funeral home. The Storey glove factory occupied the lots occupied now by the post office and houses along Alice St.

Mayor Les Doby has the distinction of being the last elected mayor of Acton, a post he has filled with tremendous popular support since he was drafted from the ranks of council. There were those who would have liked to draft Les to run for mayor of the new town of Halton Hills in 1973 but he declined in favor of seeking a regular council seat. He was successful along with Reeve G. W. (Pat)

McKenzie and former clerk J. T. (Joe) Hurst who will represent the community on the new 13 man council of Halton Hills.

It's been a momentous 100 years for Acton. The community has had its ups and downs, its critics, boasters and a large number of people somewhere in between.

For those of us who were born, educated and have lived in Acton for most of our lives or live here by adoption the transition to regional government hardly seemed necessary. The town always seemed to be governed well at a minimum of expense. As the country grew the community grew along with it. There were problems and they were solved by local people who exhibited a large degree of common sense.

It is still possible to accost the mayor, reeve, deputy, councillors or members of any other official board on the streets on a first name basis and discuss your problems, if any, with them. Or just talk to them in a friendly manner if you want — they are accessible.

Halton Hills first mayor Tom Hill has indicated he will spend one day a week in Acton on a similar mission when 1974 arrives. Tom also is from a small community, knows the importance of first hand communication and direct nose-to-nose discussion.

Let's hope Halton Hills always places men in office who recognize the ordinary taxpayer as an important part of the community.

The new town stretches from Ballinafad to Highway 401 in length and from Crewson Corners to Norval in width, proportions which make it unwieldy. Into this space are over 32,000 people, probably 10 times the number who resided in the three municipalities at the time of Confederation.

Through this rectangular configuration runs the Niagara Escarpment on a diagonal course. In places the Escarpment is gouged by pits and quarries, in other spots it is heavily wooded and rolling. Spectacular rock formations also contribute to some of Ontario's finest scenery, relieved by the arable farm land both above and below. The Credit River and its tributaries drains a great deal of the land.

The two urban municipalities have a variety of manufacturing enterprises which diminish the risk of depending on one large industry for employment and support.

There is no reason really why the new town shouldn't work well. The union has all the natural and other factors to lend it support.

And now it is up to all of us to see it works.

Bill SMILEY



When there are no kids around, Christmas loses a lot of its excitement. At least that's the way it seems around our house this year.

We've always had a family Christmas, most often at the farm of the grandparents. Those were great old traditional festivities.

We drove to the farm, left the car at the highway and staggered through the snow up the lane to the house, loaded with gifts. The kids, wrapped to the noses, were fairly hysterical by the time we entered the big, warm farm kitchen.

There we were assailed by the enveloping scents of roasting turkey and pine needles, a wonderful combination.

Then came the opening of presents, with everybody protesting, "Oh, you shouldn't have..." Except the kids. They would rip off the wrappings, scarcely glance at the contents and start looking under the tree for another package with their name on it.

A lot of love and thought went into the gifts, and sometimes there were tears of pleasure.

The women talked a blue streak and crouched off each other as they charged around the kitchen. The men sat around drooling. And the children were the centre of attention, funny and delightful, and they loved it.

Then came the great orgy at the table, with everyone from the slightest to Granddad tucking into the turkey and trimmings until their eyes were bulging.

This was sort of the climax of the holiday, and like every climax, it had its anti-climax: great stacks of dishes to be washed; distended bellies; exhausted kids. In its way, it was a pretty pagan celebration.

But by evening, everything was cleared up, digestions would begin operating again, and there'd be carols and quiet talk and a general feeling of warmth and love and security.

This was the culmination of several weeks of Christmas pageants and Christmas parties at the Legion Hall for the kids, and writing cards to old friends, and scrambling around for gifts, and putting up the three-branched tree and pretending there weren't going to be a lot of presents this year.

They were good times, and I miss them, but I don't know whether I could stand the pace any more. I was working about twelve hours a day, and there seemed to be a festivity of something every night.

There were a couple of Christmases that were funny in retrospect, though at the time there was a marked lack of Christian spirit.

One was the time we bought the television set for the grandparents. It was in the early days of TV, and we all chipped in to buy the set. None of us could afford one for ourselves. There was tremendous secrecy. It was to be the surprise of the century. My brother-in-law and I dragged

the great brute of a box up the lane on a toboggan and wrestled it into the farmhouse. It was to be opened under the tree.

Kim was about three, and full of that wild excitement that invests kids at Christmas. We had barely deposited the big box in the house when she piped, "Hope you like the tee-bee, Grummy." Some secret. Some surprise.

And there was the Christmas we held at our place. The grandparents and the aunts and other assorted buddies were invited. My wife had spent two hours the night before scrubbing and waxing the kitchen floor. I had spent three hours preparing the turkey. We were going to show them that we could entertain in style.

All was in readiness. The Old Battleaxe told me to take the turk out of the oven. I did, skidded on the wax, and roasting pan, turkey and all went flying through the air. Wall-to-wall grease. Turkey basted in floor-wax. It was one of the less memorable moments in a happy marriage.

And I remember Christmases a long time ago, in the Depression, when a child's one and only present might be a suit of long underwear, or a hand-knit sweater. Depressing, was the Depression.

Of recent years, our kids have come straggling in from university, sometimes with a friend, for Christmas. And we've had music and good food, and fun.

Last year we were alone. If I remember correctly, we dined on frozen meat pies. I had bought the usual two trees. I got the little one up. The big spruce was leaned in a corner, and I threw it out on Boxing Day.

This year, we'll be alone again. But things are going to be different.

So, we're thinking of closing up the joint and going to the city. My wife can supervise the layette. I can write cheques. We'll stay in a hotel, where somebody else had to grapple with the tree.

Free Press Editorial Page

Lowering drinking age no help

Lowering the drinking age in Ontario and across the country has been a big bust, if the measure was designed to bring under-age drinking into the open. Main effect of the legislation has been a lower illegal drinking age. Teenagers three to four years younger than the legal age can "pass" as old enough to buy. And those of legal age are consuming more alcohol. All 10 provinces and the two territories in Canada have lowered the legal imbibing age within the past four years and there's no significant pressure to rescind the laws. Studies available make sobering reading. The Journal, official publication of the Addiction Research Foundation, notes:

In Metropolitan Toronto in 1970, before the age was reduced from 21 to 18, 48 charges of impaired driving were laid against drivers aged 18 to 20. In only the second half of 1971, after the change, this had soared to 259, and in 1972 it had almost doubled to 457. The same picture focuses for personal injury accidents in which the driver was 18 to 20. There were 179 in 1970, 272 in the last half of 1971, and 425 in 1972. While there isn't much hard data, there are lots of empirical observations about the changes brought about by the lowered age. These are consistent coast to coast, border to Arctic. —Drinking-driving offences among the young are increasing, other alcohol offences like minor consuming and illegal possession

are decreasing. —The public has accepted the new laws. Since in most cases the lowered drinking age coincided with a lowered voting age, it would be "political suicide" for politicians to back any movement for a return to 21. —People are getting into trouble with alcohol, and seeking help for it, at a younger age. The data available is disturbing. Perhaps the Government never realized what a Pandora's Box they opened when they passed legislation to lowering the drinking age. It is becoming increasingly clear no effort was made to project the social consequences of the legislation. As a result no one knows what to do about it.

OUR READERS WRITE:

Asks snowmobilers' consideration

184 Churchill Rd. N. Acton, Ont. Dec. 13, 1973. Editor, Acton Free Press. Dear Sir: Like a great many other people I indulge in my favorite sport as the seasons permit. I own, train and ride my own horse for both personal pleasure and competition. Once again, winter is upon us and so are the snowmobiles — noisier and faster with each coming year. I have learned two things from my time

with horses. Firstly, the slower the horse, the more control you have over it; and secondly, be a good horse up and down this street and I'll thank the snowmobilers to abide by the same courtesy. The speed limit here is 30 mph. I have young children and you're scaring the living hell out of me, my boys and my neighbors. If local restrictions befall you, it will be because of a careless, inconsiderate few. You could maim or kill a child — won't you think of that before you rev it up next time? Respectfully, Mrs. Pat Gamsyager.

No name

Another letter has been received in reply to last week's, on the subject of the teachers' walkout. However since it was not signed it cannot be used. All letters to the editor must be signed, although the name need not be used in the Free Press when the letter is published.

Disputes points with letter writer

Dear Editor, I would like to respond to the letter "from the old school" which appeared in your week's paper. I am a teacher and I feel that the person who wrote the letter does not understand the school system as it exists today. I know many parents are appreciative of the concern that many teachers show for their children. I also know from listening to the radio during the past couple of weeks that there are many people who do not understand what teaching involves. I feel strongly that a greater tie is needed between home and school so that we may all work in the best interests of the children concerned. There were three points in the letter which I would like to dispute. First of all teachers are not allowed to "strike a child

across the knuckles" today. Secondly, the day picked for the walkout was chosen by the federation, not the teachers. I, along with all of my colleagues went to school Tuesday evening and "babysat" children for three hours while their parents watched our Christmas concert. Thirdly, I attend Wilfrid Laurier University and I have spent hours attending lectures and studying. Therefore I can truthfully say that I have earned every credit I have received. I feel an apology is in hand for all teachers who attend the university. If the person who wrote the letter has had any "easy courses" please feel free to contact me and let me know who your professors were as I wouldn't mind an easy course this summer. Perhaps I'd have some time left to "back in the sun on the grassy campus."

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Back Issues of The Free Press

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, December 21, 1953. On Monday a ton of mail was taken from the station to the post office by Jack Locker, who said that the 64 bags of mail constituted the heaviest load he has ever had in one morning. Bags of mail were piled in every corner of the post office on the heaviest day of the Christmas rush. Over 85,000 two-cent stamps had been sold in the last two or three days. Some of the staff worked Sunday as well and each evening. (In the regular staff are postmaster Frank Terry, Fern Brown, Gord McKeown and Mrs. Helen Joque. Cam Leishman, usually part-time help, is full-time these days. Mrs. Irene Terry and Mrs. Lucy Walters are additional full-time workers while Mrs. Jean Leishman and Mrs. Wilma Chapman are working part-time. One of Acton's esteemed citizens Jeremiah Bell passed away. He had lived in the same house on Church St. for 43 years. St. Joseph's church basement was filled for the annual Christmas party of the parish. Youngsters and their parents numbered 200. Giving recitations were Peter Barr, Bernie Benton, Laurie Bennett, Helen Benton, Patt Barr, Linda Braida and Danny Arbie. Adrian Vos played a piano solo and Jo Seelen an accordion solo. Father Morgan acted as master of ceremonies. Engraved gold watches for 10 years' service at Baxter Labs were presented to Mrs. Harold Kinraid, Mrs. Margaret Simclair, Sam Snyder, Dave Drysdale and Anthony Hufnagel. Dinner and program for 80 was in the Y. Clarence Rogvaldson acted as master of ceremonies. Gerry Chandler, Johnny Graham and Rino Braida formed an employees' orchestra. In charge were Bob Marshall, Mrs. J. Bradshaw and Miss Virena Johnson. Santa Claus arrived.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, December 27, 1903. The annual high school at home was one of the best ever. The different items were as follows: group songs by the school; chairman's address by Rev. A. C. Stewart; folk dance, piano duet by Miss Gray and Russell Ross; French recitations from Henry Drummond by Addie Hurst; a French song by girls of the high school; presentations to teachers: Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Byrne; reading of the school paper by Helen McDonnell. The programme was closed with a one-act play with Arthur Hackett, Wilfrid Reid, Marguerite Ryder and Gwendolyn Maddock taking the various roles. After the programme a series of promenades and dances were indulged in and at intermission a delightful lunch was served by the pupils. The Acton Radio Electric is demonstrating our receivers at the home of J. Precious, John St. We are opening demonstrating parlours in the studio next to J. C. Hill. Watch for the date. Spark's Phantom Liver Concert Receiver \$25. This set has received concerts over 1,000 miles away. One tube receiver, complete \$42.50; radiolux superselective, complete \$115. Specials for interested young men. Build your own set, complete parts for one tube receiver \$25; three tube receiver \$68.50; loud speaker \$18.75. Free advice on assembling and wiring. G. Precious manager. E. Coles sales manager. Landlord Ritchie of the Sunderland House made quite a hit among citizens and visitors when he turned on the scores of electric lights which illuminate his lawn on Christmas Sunday evening. The effect was quite a fairytale appearance and the hundreds of citizens passing after church appreciate very much the pretty spectacle. The Christmas displays in the shop windows were highly creditable to our merchants.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, December 22, 1828. The county court sessions were very dull. There was no business before the courts. The petit jury men answered to their names, received their pay and went home. The grand jury men examined the county buildings, made their usual presentment, received their pay and went home. A company of between 30 and 40 of our businessmen and citizens sat down to a splendid oyster supper at Clark's Hotel Monday. They met to say a kindly farewell to Mr. E. B. Collins who is moving to Buffalo. The pitch holes in the roads have been hard on the cutter shafts. Acton's hockey club has re-organized with a rink on Henderson's pond. The new imperial penny postage comes into effect on Christmas Day. Then you can write to Calcutta, India, for two cents but it will cost you three cents to write to your girl at Crewson Corners. Pringle's—Everything you can think of, Christmas Times are Here! Rings — We have an extra stock in, prices from \$1, but our prettiest ones run from \$2 to \$10. Opals are still the fashionable stones. Photo cameras from 69c up to \$20. We will be pleased to instruct as to their use. Marriage Licenses — a splendid thing to buy if you are just ready for one. Rubber stamps for marking your linen from 25c up. The Right House. Ladies' leather purses with chains from 30c. Ladies' calling cases 30c to \$2. Muff guards made of the best English jet \$1.35; men's white shirts, linen bosoms 50c to \$1.25; men's dog-skin gloves \$1.25; unlaundered handkerchiefs 10c. Windsor ties and bows 35c. Czarina two-clasp ladies' gloves \$1. D. E. MacDonald and Bro. — The nobbiest and most useful suits and overcoats, stylish ties and caps. For the mother and daughter, set of furs, fur cape, kid gloves, jewelled belt or daintily embroidered handkerchief. HO! For Christmas, 500 lb. of candies at C. F. Goodeve and Co. Chocolate drops, bars and sticks, creams, mixtures, Butterscotch.