

# John McCormack—Ireland's most famous tenor

R.R. 1, Limehouse,  
Dear sirs:  
It is getting near St. Patrick's Day and I am sending you my usual contribution. Thanking you for your kindness in the past. Best wishes to you all.  
I am,  
Sincerely yours,  
Catherine Graham

**JOHN McCORMACK**  
John McCormack was Ireland's most famous tenor. He was born the 14th June 1884. In 1903 at the age of 19 he won a gold medal at the Teis Ceili (music festival held annually in Dublin) and from then on he was on his way.  
He studied first under Dr. Vincent

O'Brien and then went to Italy, and studied under the famous Italian conductor Vincenzo Sabatini. There he made his debut in Italian Grand Opera in 1906. That same year he married Lily Foley, herself a singer of considerable merit. In 1907 when he was 23 he made his Covent Garden debut, the youngest principal tenor to sing there. It was in London that he sang for Sir Wilfred Laurier and his wife. (He was Prime Minister of Canada from 1896 to 1911.) He was assisted by a famous Canadian singer Eve Gauthier.  
It was here that Oscar Hammerstein heard him sing, and invited him to sing at the Manhattan Opera House (that was in 1914). For a number of years after that, he travelled regularly between the U.S. and England singing opera. He also visited Eu-

rope (was in Germany when the first world war was declared, had to get out of there quickly), South Africa, Australia, Japan and China.  
He was the first singer to have stage audiences. So many people came to hear him sing, that they got tired sending them away, so decided to let them up on stage. This arrangement had its drawbacks for at times his accompanist and himself had trouble getting near the piano. An old Irishman who was sitting at the back of the stage was asked if he was enjoying the concert "yes," said he, "I prefer McCormack's back to a lot of their faces."  
Later in his life he gave up opera singing and concentrated on religious songs. (He sang at the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 1932) and ballads especially Irish clas-

sical airs including Moore's melodies.  
During the second world war he gave a concert for the Canadian troops. They enjoyed his songs, especially when he sang Mather Macrae.  
In 1924 he bought a mansion, 28 miles from Dublin, in Co. Kildare (Moore Abbey), spent his summers there.  
In the twenties I remember some friends coming to see our family. They were Americans and friends of McCormack's, and when they came and told us they first paid him a visit we were naturally very pleased that we were also on their list. Looking back over those years, it is more like a dream than reality.  
In his day he met and made friends with many famous people. Caruso was his contemporary and his best friend (one of the

greatest singers of all time) Gene Tunney (boxer), James Joyce, Will Rogers and the Kennedy family.  
It was at a concert in Buffalo, that he announced his retirement from the stage. He went back to Ireland and died in 1945. I regret to say that when he died his music was buried with him. Today his name is never mentioned, nor do we hear any of his records. His wife wrote an autobiography of their life together, titled "I Hear You Calling Me". This was the name of a song he made famous. I shall end with a verse from it.  
I hear you calling me  
And oh! the ringing gladness of your voice,  
Those fears that made my longing heart rejoice.  
You spoke, do you remember, and my heart, still hears the distant music of your voice.



GLAMOUR IS an innovation these days at the corner of No. 7 Highway and Acton Blvd. Pat Marchant is the newly hired crossing guard who combines her grade 13 Acton high school program with assisting M.Z. Bennett public school students crossing the highway. She is seen with two pupil customers, Paul Lowe of 92 Churhill Rd., and Teddy Reeve of R.R. 1, Limehouse.

## Real issue is who will pay

The swimming pool debacle Halton Hills finds itself in is the direct result of the introduction of regional government. Councillors are almost being asked to choose priorities between the Acton or Georgetown pools when that really is not the issue at all.  
By all means, let the town take over financing the Acton pool to get all the available grants but it in no way should hold up the Georgetown project.  
The real issue is who will pay for the two projects. Should Acton and Esquesing people help pay for the

Georgetown pool? And vice versa — should Georgetown and Esquesing help pay for the Acton pool.  
We don't think so — only on a voluntary basis.  
These were projects conceived and developed before the introduction of regional government by two separate municipalities. The councils of both decided each municipality could afford the projects.  
We believe such projects should be paid by the benefitting municipality. Projects conceived

and planned after January 1 by the full council of Halton Hills may have to be paid for by all ratepayers, but that's another issue.  
All the projects now before council — the Georgetown pool, arena-theatre and addition to the library, and the Acton pool — should be paid for by the benefitting municipality.  
Of course, there are going to be fuzzy lines in Esquesing, which might be resolved by following the borders of the fire area, if it is determined rural residents want to

contribute to the projects.  
In any event it is foolish for councillors to argue over projects and priorities when they were set before regional government was implemented. There was general agreement before the town of Halton Hills was introduced that existing projects would be shouldered by the benefitting municipality. Why not simply follow these guidelines and forget the arguing until there's a project in which all four wards of Halton Hills can participate and plan together?

## Free Press Editorial Page

B2 The Acton Free Press, Wed., March 13, 1974

## Christmas lighting justified

Acton hydro commissioners were apparently justified in sticking with their Christmas home decorating contest. At the time, there was a lot of talk—mainly

from the U.S.—about the energy shortage. However the commission here decided not to cancel their annual competition.  
Now the latest issue of Hydro

News states "the supply of electricity at Christmas time was more than adequate. The annual peak load occurred on December 17—the very day homes here were judged—and it was about 13,717,000 kilowatts. System reserves amounted to over 3,000,000 kilowatts."

people can't exactly figure out why. "Perhaps most people weren't quite sure themselves. Perhaps they felt a vague sense of guilt at the thought of advertising their affluence when so many people elsewhere were really feeling the energy crunch. Others, no doubt, kept the lights out as their contribution to the conservation of resources, albeit with a very fuzzy notion of what they were accomplishing. Whether or not this gesture of self-denial was meaningful in the full context of the energy supply picture is up to the individual to decide."

## Bill SMILEY



Have you noticed the big change in the world of big capitalism in the past couple of decades?

The personnel in the inner sanctum of high finance is just as piratical as that of the robber baron days, but the things they wheel and deal in are vastly different.

The bad old boys, the Fords and the Rockefeller's, the J. P. Morgans and the Andrew Carnegies, were giants of finance, and a pretty unscrupulous lot, from all accounts.

They dealt with solid, tangible assets: steel and coal, oil, minerals, railways and banks.

Their techniques were roughly similar. Get hold of something as cheaply as possible, and dispose of it for as much as possible. And never pay a working man more than the absolute minimum. A simple formula, but it piled up millions, then billions.

Today, their names are connected with great philanthropies, but when they were alive, their names produced more curses than blessings. They fought the unions bitterly. They bribed and bullied and stole.

They'd have laughed at the idea that their deprivations were destroying the ecology. They'd have had apoplexy if someone had suggested something as ridiculous as fringe benefits.

It's probably just as well they have gone, though they were a colorful lot of bandits.

Today's entrepreneurs seem to be just as arrogant, greedy, and ruthless, but the things they deal in have changed almost completely.

Banks and railways and airlines are still highly profitable, but they are no longer the financial playthings of a few men. They have become exceedingly dull, huge bureaucracies with little life or color in them.

The new breed of bandit steers clear of them. Oh, your modern wheeler might take a flurry in oil, but it's more likely to be floating a stock issue than getting the stuff out of the ground.

Today's financial magnate is far more interested in the half-world of sports and entertainment, then he is in just old things, like mines and such.

He still goes where the big buck is, but the action has changed. Nowadays, he's more likely to own a prizefighter or a string of horses than a chunk of a copper mine. Today's big money is in publishing, radio and television, and sports.

And the really big money is in land speculation. Your old-time financier would have been stunned, and envious, could he

see the doubling and tripling of money in the buying and selling of plain old land.

So, it's in the areas mentioned that you'll find the modern sharks, in large schools, gobbling up the little suckers and regurgitating them for all the slightly larger suckers.

Another big change is in the publicity involved. The magnates of yesteryear were very close-mouthed. They kept their private lives as secluded as possible, retreated to vast homes and tried to keep the press at arm's length.

Today's maggots (oops, a Freudian slip), glory in the limelight. They are never happier than when they have the media speculating about their next deal. They manipulate the press. After all, every story, every picture, drives up the price of whatever they're selling, and is also great for the ego. They'll call a press conference to discuss a pending operation for an in-grown toenail.

Even P. T. Barnum, the greatest con man of them all, would be green with jealousy if he could see the way some of the modern con artists use every trick he ever knew, and some they've invented, to sucker people into watching a third-rate sports team, or a third-rate prize fight.

There's one other aspect of the great scramble for the buck that has changed drastically. That's the relationship with the people working for the big dealers.

In the bad old days, when laissez-faire reigned supreme, it was the accepted custom to grind the worker down, and sweat the very life-blood out of him, to wring the last cent of profit.

Today the worm has turned, particularly in sports. All you need, if you're a pretty good athlete, is a good lawyer, and you can put the boss through the wringer.

Can you imagine the look on the face of J. P. Morgan if someone could tell him that athletes, mere bodies, were pulling in salaries in six figures?

This last aspect would seem to be a matter for sheer joy for most of us — watching the bosses being squeezed by the workers.

But alas. It won't do us any good, fellow sucker. The boss will merely raise the price of admission and won't lose a nickel of his own money.

Sounds like the government, doesn't it? When everything costs them more, they raise our taxes to pay for the increases. When everything costs us more, they raise the taxes as a curb against inflation.

Get in line, sucker, for the next increase in the price of tickets.

Somehow, for all their faults, I like the old bandits better.

## City lights

I was invited to the city. To spend a couple of nights. From skyline flats, and automats. We took in all the sights.

We toured around big buildings. Took in the City Hall. This culture scare, was hiding there. Inside a concrete wall.

There was water squirting 'round the place. It was then I got a shock. I hurt her pride, when I asked my guide. Why they left that awful rock.

She said, "It is a thing of beauty". This was a cultural gem. Carved in stone, it stood alone. A tribute to ALL men.

I was afraid to ask more questions. So I stood there looking wise. I laughed alone, as I viewed the stone; They forgot to carve the eyes.

Then we went on to the Gallery. To see the painted wall. These works of art gave me a start. It was a decorator's ball.

We took an elevator. Way up above the crowds. Our "coffee cup" — a dollar a cup. Up there in the clouds.

Now, I'm back out in the country. With my nature in the raw. With a horse and cow, I'm contented now. After seeing what I saw.

—Victor Smith

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REMEMBER THE OLD Harris Woollen Mills along Valley Road, Rockwood? Don Hills of 153 Main St., Rockwood, is trying to dig up information about the mills before it is no longer available. Any information will be appreciated.

## Free Press back issues

### 20 years ago

**Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, March 11, 1954**  
Two fires within 15 hours left 14 people homeless in driving snow storms and high winds last week as flames levelled two district farm homes claiming nearly all the contents. A fire at the home of Harold Michie, one mile east of No. 25 highway on the sideroad south of Glenspey Mushroom Co. Thursday completely levelled the storey and a half house.  
Friday morning nine escaped with seconds to spare from a fire at the home of Clarence Dodds, three miles west of Speyside.  
Although a numerical majority of Acton's retail merchants have indicated favor of Friday night store hours over Saturday night opening, the necessary 75 per cent endorsement of the new proposal was not signified. S. Eisen and J. Ledger formed a committee to work further toward the change.

Ostrander, Mrs. Amos Mason. During the interval while the stage was being set for the minstrels a couple of character songs in costume were rendered by Miss Cross and her brother Rigby Cross, which brought down the house.  
The personnel of the minstrels was confined to the members of the band with two exceptions. Bandmaster Mason occupied the position of interlocutor to perfection and kept the "coons" busy with his interrogations. The Dixieland quartet, Jim Smith, Len Worden, Alex Mann and Vic Humley, were fine. The Lime Kiln club put on a melody chorus with banjos, George Bishop, Ray Agnew, Rudolph Spielvogel, Vic Humley, Lloyd Forbes, Tom Savage, L. Worden, Jim Smith and Alex Mann. Harmony Four — Pure Brass — was played by Handsmen Allen, Moore, Chalmers and Savage. The town clock neared the hour of eleven as the Good Night Chorus by the Whole Show concluded the program.

### 75 years ago

**Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, March 9, 1899**  
Four weeks ago John, the 19-year-old son of Peter Gibbons, Esquesing, was operated upon by Drs. Uren, McDonald and Nixon for appendicitis. He was in a very critical condition but his recovery has been rapid and his friends are delighted to see him able to be about again.  
"Thank Heavens, the work is finished," was Reeve Pearson's fervent expression, as he read the report of the Electric Light Committee covering the cost to the Council, four months from the date of the vote on the by-law. These four months have contained much anxiety, responsibility and careful supervision for the committee.  
The cozy home of Mr. James Wilson, foreman of the glove leather tannery, has been a place of deep mourning. Robert, the 16-year-old son, was going about his work in the tannery when his leather apron was caught by the revolving shaft and in an instant he was being whirled to his death. As his heart-broken father and others stood looking upon the mangled body the poor fellow piteously exclaimed "Take me off, father, I'm not dead." He survived for about an hour and talked freely to his aunt and was able to kiss his parents, brothers and sisters' good-bye and converse intelligibly with his pastor ere the end came. The event has cast deepest gloom over the community. The funeral was one of the largest for some time.  
Ho! for the sugar bush.

### 50 years ago

**Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, March 13, 1924.**  
"A nigger show invariably draws a crowd" was the ejaculation of an old resident the other evening. Wednesday and Thursday evenings the Acton Citizens' Band put on their popular minstrel show in the town hall. It was unique, it was versatile, it was enjoyable from start to finish. A one-act play was quite up to the mark. The cast was Mr. C. O. Plank, Mr. George Bishop, Mr. A. Mason, Mrs. A. K.