

Happy Birthday, Acton!

It is almost time to light the candles on the 100th birthday cake.

Merchants have organized into a scheme which will offer 10 days of celebrations to mark this community's 100th birthday. Businesses, people and clerks are dressing up in old fashioned clothes, the firefighters are going to throw a wing-ding at the park Monday July 1 in conjunction with the Rotary club that includes a fish derby, rock concert, chicken barbeque, band concert, water ball contest, appearances by the Choralliers. It is all going to wind up with a ripsnortin' fireworks display at dusk.

The occasion has generated so much excitement they are even going to turn on the Christmas lights, owned by the Chamber of Commerce and juiced by the town, to mark the occasion. The Free Press has published a special supplement.

Acton's first settlers—the Adams brothers—would never recognize the community they founded back when Fairy Lake was a sparking stream through a

meadow which offered a source of water power.

Of course, this birthday is not to celebrate the anniversary of the first settlement but to mark the occasion when the community felt self-sufficient enough to separate from Esquesing township and stride out on its own, as an incorporated village with its own council.

Prior to 1874, Acton was home to about 800 people, first named Danville after a clever young man who worked in the hamlet's first dry-goods store. The community's next name was Adamsville after the first settlers, Zenas, Rufus and Ezra Adams.

It wasn't until 1844 when the name was changed to Acton—so there's been an Acton, Ontario for 130 years.

The name Acton was chosen on the suggestion of Robert Swan, a native of Northumberland, England, and it was chosen that year because it was the occasion of the opening of the first post office.

The first council of the Village of Acton was headed by Reeve W. H.

Storey, well known glovemaker, whose Storey Glove Co., once occupied the land where the present post office sits at the corner of Bower and Alice Sts. Messrs. John Speight, Asa Hall, C. T. Hill and McGarvin comprised the first councillors.

The men on that first council would probably have been astonished to learn that 100 years after they launched the new community it had been incorporated into the new town of Halton Hills.

Changes occur and the latest has yet to prove itself but certainly the steps they took 100 years ago to run their own affairs have proven to be beneficial. The town has never experienced meteoric growth or blossomed into a city but there has been steady progress over the years, despite occasional setbacks.

And despite the knocks people are still proud to say they live or once lived in Acton.

So happy birthday, Acton—and 100 more years of success.

Free Press Editorial Page

8 The Acton Free Press, Wed., June 26, 1974

Why not ward names?

Councillor Les Duby came up with what we consider an excellent suggestion for the perpetuity of old traditions in Halton Hills last week.

He suggested the four wards be renamed after the community instead of being designated by impersonal numbers—one, two, three, four. In other words, instead of calling the two Georgetown wards three and four, they could be Georgetown West Ward and Georgetown East Ward respectively. Acton would be Acton Ward instead of Ward One and

Esquesing would be Esquesing Ward instead of Ward Two.

By retaining the old names the people of Halton Hills have something to identify with instead of a number which has never been known to stimulate much enthusiasm. By the same token the geographical location of the ward would be explained without having to resort to further explanations as to where the area is located.

It is a suggestion which should be fully explored and discussed.

Housing proposals complicated

The housing proposals put forward by the Liberals are so detailed and complicated that it's going to be tough for voters to decide whether they want them or not, between now and election day, says Beatrice Riddell in The Financial Post.

Much of the program is aimed at providing financing for moderately-priced houses. Highlights detailed by FP are:

(1.) Maximum loan amounts for mortgages insured under the National Housing Act have been raised for many Canadian centres and vary from place to place. In all locations a 95 per cent NHA loan is available on a house priced up to \$31,580. Then, 75 per cent of the excess over \$31,580 is available in many locations up to maximum house values which vary from place to place. Few argue that the NHA loan limits should be raised in certain areas, although it's not clear why this wasn't done before now. The idea is to concentrate high-ratio lending in the lower and medium-priced range. A high-ratio loan is one in which the total loan is more than 75 per cent of the house value.

(2.) Changes in the Assisted Home Ownership Program have been announced. The program is designed to assist a lower or middle-income family in the purchase of a house without spending more than 22 per cent of gross family income on the carrying costs. The plan provides a participant (whose income must be within certain limits) with a 95 per cent mortgage and other measures to keep the cost within the 22 per cent limit; a preferred interest rate (currently 9½ per cent); extended loan terms; interest rate assistance grants. This plan has been expanded to put higher ceilings on house prices and income levels and the interest rate assistance grant has been increased to a maximum of \$600 a year from the former \$300.

(3.) A tax-free grant of \$500 would be given to anyone buying a newly built house for the first time—providing the house is within the price ranges established for high-ratio loans under the National Housing Act. This measure is designed as a partial rebate for the 11 per cent federal sales tax on building materials,

which the present government has refused to remove or reduce. While some would prefer to see the sales tax eliminated altogether, this proposal has one important advantage: the benefit would go directly to the house-buyer and not the builder.

(4.) Changes are announced for the land lease option for non-profit and co-operative housing. The current program provides 100 per cent financing, a preferred interest rate (8 per cent at present) and a 10 per cent forgiveness grant. Now, in lieu of the 10 per cent capital grant—inadequate where land costs are particularly high—CMHC will buy the land and lease it to non-profit groups for a 50-year term, at a preferred rate and with renewal options. It will provide 100 per cent financing of the building improvement.

(5.) Federal home warranties to provide warranty protection for purchasers of new housing are planned. There would be purchaser warranty on all homes financed by loans under federal lending legislation, including both NHA and privately insured high-ratio loans.

Free Press

back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of June 24, 1954.

Grade eight pupils began writing their examinations last Thursday and finish today.

Power failure resulted in one section of town Sunday morning when a fuse blew on a transformer.

Damage estimated at \$50 was caused to a car driven by Douglas Vickery early Sunday morning when the vehicle skidded on the gravel of Sixth Line, Esquesing, south of No. 7 highway, struck a pole and snapped it off.

A surprise general fire alarm throughout the county sent eight fire engines speeding to Georgetown last Friday evening where a mutual fire aid practice was held. Traffic was rerouted as water from a creek was relayed through the pumps and forced through several hoses onto the street. A large crowd assembled, some expecting a serious fire.

Born: Guthrie-Mr. and Mrs. Doug Guthrie are happy to announce the birth of their son, Bruce Douglas, at Guelph General Hospital, on the 17th June. A brother for Margaret.

Miss Esther Taylor has been engaged as assistant librarian for Acton Public Library. She is replacing Mrs. S. Norton, who resigned recently.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of June 26, 1924.

Last Saturday afternoon Mr. Wm. Kelly was coming along Elgin Street when a car, driven by Leo O'Malley, of Toronto, was proceeding down Mill Street. Mr. Kelly did not see the car on Mill Street in time to stop and ran head on into the side of O'Malley's car. The impact punctured two tires on the Toronto man's car, but other than that little damage was done, and both cars were able to proceed on their journey.

On Monday, June 30, daylight saving time will go into effect in the tanneries of Beardmore & Co., and the Acton Tanning Co. here. This has been made necessary since Toronto is on this daylight saving time and the Toronto office of the company operates on daylight saving time. Business between the two offices was practically suspended for three hours each day owing to the two sets of time. What attitude the remainder of the town will take in the matter has not been decided upon. It was not discussed at the last meeting of the Council, but will probably come up on Monday evening next. The Beardmore Co., will only operate this system during the months of July and August, so that it will not interfere with the schools as the holidays are now on.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of June 22, 1899.

It was a very general satisfaction to see the G.T.R. trackman return to work on Monday morning and to understand that the big strike was ended. The intervention of representatives of the Government with the General Manager had good effect, and while the demands of the men have not been acceded to in all respects, assurances have been given that their position will be materially bettered in the near future.

The semi-annual examinations of the pupils of Acton Public School will be held next Tuesday, 27th inst., in the afternoon. The five departments will be open to visitors and it will be of interest to the parents and guardians to be present to observe the standing of the scholars as they enter upon the long summer vacation.

Monday evening was a perfect moonlight June night—one of which poets might have sung. A large concourse of citizens and visitors spent the evening delightfully at the Epworth League Garden Party on the lawn of the Misses Laing, Agnes Street. The pretty flower girls, the attentive waiters, the tempting viands and toothsome refreshments contributed to the evening's enjoyments.



Three cheers for Acton's birthday

Michael Dowles, Donny and Cindy Brouillard, Nancy Patterson, Michael Galbraith, Betty Ann Elliot, Danny Tremblay, Steven Matheson and Steven McDonald.

Bill SMILEY



Both teachers and students look forward eagerly to the end of the school year, for different reasons.

For the students, especially the younger ones, it's like a rebirth to get out into that beautiful June, out of that hot classroom, away from that cranky teacher. They go belting out that door on the last day like bees coming out of a disturbed bees-nest.

A few of the more sensitive ones, especially the girls, will trill, "See you next year," or "Have a good summer, Mr. Smiley." The boys leave in a slap-dash, jostling mob, with never a look behind.

And who can blame them? It's been a long ten months. They want to get out and do some real living, to break the routines that even in these permissive days, make school a drag, and for some, unfortunately, a simple bore.

When I was in high school I took off in May or early June for a job on the lake boats, with a tremendous sense of release. I didn't care whether they passed me or failed me. After the first summer, I knew it was going to be four months of drudgery, at "roolies" wages, but I didn't care. I was living, seeing new places and new people, and delighting in it.

Yet, strangely, by September, I had a great nostalgia for school, school friends, football and track and field, and could scarcely wait to start the long hitch-hike home.

Each fall was a joy. Football every day. A new girl, or the old faithful one, to hold hands with on crisp fall evenings. Some money in the pocket, after the summer.

This euphoria lasted until about the end of November. By the middle of January, life and school were deadly dull. The money was pretty well gone. It was too cold for outdoor smooching, and in those days no girl was allowed to have a boy into her house, unless her mother was sitting there looking suspicious and her father sitting there with a gun.

We couldn't afford to smoke or drink or party or tear around, so, on the whole, we were a fairly moral lot. Believe it or not, I was president of a Young Man's Bible Class for three years. My high school principal was the leader, and he forced me into it. I figured I had to stay on the good side of him, or I'd be in high school until I was fifty.

There was only one thing I really learned in those long winters at school. With no money to do anything else, my gang tended to spend most of our time in the pool room, despite constant abjurations and threats from our mothers.

There are quite a few things you can pick up in a poolroom: psychology; a colorful vocabulary; a smell of spittions. I got all of these, but I also became a pretty darn good pool player, and I've never regretted it.

You have to become good when you are "playing on your nerve". This quaint old expression means you haven't the money to pay the proprietor for your tabletime, if you lose. Winner plays free. So you either win, or you sweet-talked the boss of the poolroom into adding what you owed to your bill. This was about as easy as President Nixon standing before Congress, hand on heart, saying, "I cannot tell a lie."

It usually meant expulsion from the poolroom, which was like being thrown out of the Garden of Eden.

Then there was the drowsing through long, spring days, waiting for school to end. I remember a poor man called Dr. Wheatly, saying to me one June day, head wagging sadly, "Bill, you will never pass physics or chemistry, should you stay here until you are a grandfather. So I'm going to recommend you." I've never forgotten this wise remark, and have since, as a teacher, always tempered justice with mercy.

But I drift. School was then, is now, and ever shall be, a place to get out of, come June.

Yet there is a little sadness among the older students, who are graduating. They are finally mature enough to realize these were possibly the best years of their lives. They sign each other's yearbooks. Some weep. They promise to keep in touch, but knowing they probably will not, after the first year. They are scattering.

Halcyon days are over. They are stepping off, sometimes fearfully, into a world of work and responsibility and striving for success and raising families (which alone, in these times, is enough to make one want to stay in school forever.)

I deplore sentimentality. But sure enough, last class, last day of school, I turned around and there was a beautiful cake, inscribed, "Best Wishes, Mr. Smiley, from 13B, '74." Even the punctuation right. I was touched.

And astonished, I expressed my admiration and appreciation, and said, "Wait 'til my wife sees this." The response was, more or less, "Your wife, our foot. Look in the paper bag." Sure enough, it contained paper napkins and plastic forks. There was a knife in the cake box. So we had our cake and ate it, communally, and quietly listened to a funny record. Then we left, happily. And sadly.

It sure ain't all rocks

Milton town planner Bob Zsadanyi should know better now than to throw rocks at Nassagaweya.

Speaking to the Milton Chamber of Commerce last week Zsadanyi referred to the town's official plan as providing for some rural estate development in Nassagaweya. "It's a natural out there - it's only scrub and rock," he commented.

He didn't know former Nassagaweyan Andy Frank was in the audience or he might have scrubbed that remark.

The Franks have been in Nassagaweya for some time. There are rumors that there were Franks here to greet the first settlers. In

any event what they don't know about Nassagaweya isn't worth knowing.

Andy took the bait frankly. "I hope he (Zsadanyi) has a greater knowledge of planning than he has of Nassagaweya," the former sheriff replied. "I grew 10,000 quarts of strawberries a year in 'rocky Nassagaweya'. There are farms in Nassagaweya second to none in the province. For your information," Andy told the 29-year-old planner, "there's some of the best land in Nassagaweya as lays out-of-doors."

And some of the prettiest, too, if Andy will allow this editorialist some expression.

But there's no doubt there are plenty of rocks between those choice farms in Nassagaweya. Back in the days when baseball was enjoying palmy days in the township farmer's sons used to practice their arms by heaving rocks from the fields to the fence rows. No wonder they had such strong arms . . . and such good teams.

But in spite of the scrub and rocks there have been plenty of successful Nassagaweya farmers and there are some good looking farms out that way yet - - and farmers, too.

It sure ain't all rocks.