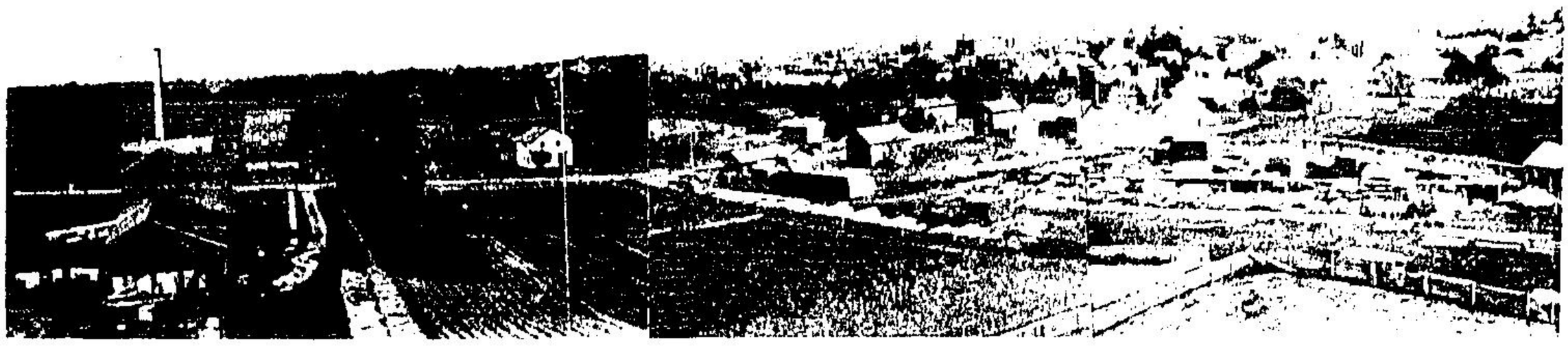

750 souls sought village status

1874 - 1974

There were 750 souls in Acton when it earned the right to become incorporated as a village on July 1, 1874.

By-law No 76 of the county of Halton placed status on the area, its Whereases and Therefores declaring that because of its 750 inhabitants and a petition signed by over 100 of them, the said village would be incorporated and separated from the township of Esquesing. Burlington was incorporated at the same time.

The first election was set for Matthews hall, up over the post office and Matthews store on Mill St.

The Free Press didn't begin to publish until almost exactly a year later, so there are no local accounts of the election or the happenings of the actual day of incorporation.

However the Milton Canadian Champion reported the actions of county council that led to Acton's beginnings.

Election

The first election was duly held and the first reeve was the man who presented the petition from his fellow townspeople to county council, W. H. Storey.

First councillors were John Speight, early settler Asa Hall, Dr. E. McGarvin and merchant C. T. Hill.

Mr. Storey had come here in 1866 and opened a saddlery and harness business before founding the flourishing Canada Glove Works on Mill St. By 1974 he has 50 employees.

He was to build himself the house that is now Rumley-Shoemaker funeral home in 1890.

Council met regularly in Matthews hall, and dealt with such matters as appointment of fence viewers, granting of $2 aid, $1.80 for keep of travellers, sidewalks and repairs.

$75 a year

James G. Hill, the first clerk and treasurer for $75 per annum and the son of councillor Hill, resigned in 1875 and ran Hill's store for many years.

The speeches gleaned from the council's oyster supper in Matthews Hall in February, 1867, reflect the local politics of the time.

In 1875 council levied a rate of four mills on the dollar for County and municipal purposes.

To council is soon to come a petition of eighty-two ladies of Acton "praying for a sidewalk to the station." Council said they'd see what they could do about it.

As well as the new council, school board met regularly and court sittings were held. There was no library.

BY LAWS OF THE COUNTY OF HALTON

BY-LAW No. 75.

To Incorporate the Village of Acton.

WHEREAS [illegible] of the unincorporated Village of Acton, in the Township of Esquesing, [illegible] under the direction of the Council, show [illegible] seven hundred and fifty [illegible] to form an incorporated Village.

And whereas a petition signed by more than one hundred freeholders has been presented to the Council, praying that the said village and neighbourhood [illegible] be erected into an incorporated village by the name of Acton.

Be it therefore enacted by the Corporation of the County of Halton that the said village and neighbourhood are hereby erected into an incorporated village apart from the Township of Esquesing by the name of Acton, and that the limits of the said village shall be as follows, namely: the westerly quarter of lot number twenty-seven, twenty-eight and twenty-nine, and the westerly quarter of the north half of lot number thirty, all in the second concession of the Township of Esquesing, also the westerly quarter of the west half and the northerly half of the east half of lot number twenty-seven, the whole of lot number twenty-eight except the north half of the easterly quarter, the westerly quarter of lot number twenty-nine and the westerly quarter of the northerly half of lot number thirty, all in the third concession of the said Township of Esquesing, bounded as follows: [illegible] The southerly angle of the said lot twenty-seven in the third concession [illegible], thence north thirty-eight degrees, [illegible] chains, thence south forty-five degrees, west thirty [illegible] southerly limit of lot number twenty-eight, thence north thirty-eight [illegible] to the centre of said lot [illegible] north forty-five degrees east [illegible] lot number twenty-[illegible] third [illegible] thirty-four and one-third chains; thence south forty-five degrees east one hundred and five chains to the southerly limit of said lot number twenty-seven in the second concession; thence north thirty-eight degrees, east crossing said road allowance, seventeen chains and two-thirds of a chain to the place of beginning, containing about five hundred acres.

That the first election shall be held in Matthews's Hall, Acton.

And that Thomas Christie is hereby appointed Returning Officer to hold the same.

Passed 2nd September, 1873.

J. D. MATHESON, Clerk pro tem. (L.S.) W. H. LYON, Warden.

W. H. STOREY - one of the village's most distinguished gentlemen, and our first reeve after incorporation.

JAMES MATTHEWS was the village postmaster for many years and operated a shop on Mill

STORE & RESIDENCE OF J. MATTHEWS ESQ. ACTON WEST.

What was it like to live in Acton in 1874?

Everyone was everyone's neighbor in those far off days a century ago and Acton was a close friendly and busy community.

With pride on Acton's centennial, the Free Press presents this account of life here one hundred years ago.

Halton County Council's formal steps to incorporate Acton as a village were neatly recorded in the Milton Canadian Champion, a weekly newspaper older than the Free Press by a couple of years.

"Mr. Clay brought up a petition for W. H. Storey and others, praying for the incorporation of the Village of Acton. Mr. Clay moved, seconded by Mr. Barber, that the petitions of W. H. Storey and one hundred and thirty others, praying that the Council will pass a by-law to incorporate the Village of Acton into a separate municipality, be received, read and referred to a special committee composed of Messrs. Waldie, Barber and the mover. Carried. Petition received, read and so referred.

"Council adjourned and resumed 30 minutes later after allowing committee to report.

It's approved

"Mr. Waldie, chairman of committee appointed to take into consideration the petition of W. H. Storey and others for incorporation of Acton, brought up their report which read.

"Mr. Waldie moved, seconded by Mr. Barber that the report of the special committee on the petition asking for incorporation of the Village of Acton be received and adopted and leave be granted to introduce a by-law at the next meeting of this council to incorporate said village."

Col. Clay was the Esquesing Reeve, John Waldie Nelson Reeve, John Barber Georgetown Reeve, W. G. Kennedy Esquesing district Reeve, Wm. McCraney Oakville Reeve and Warden W. D. Lyon Milton Reeve.

Taken from the issue of the Canadian Champion of Sept. 4, 1873, from the county council meeting of Sept. 2, 1873.

"Mr. Clay moved, seconded by Mr. Barber, that by-law No. to incorporate the Village of Acton, be now read a first time. Carried.

"On motion of Mr. Kennedy, seconded by Mr. McCraney the by-law to incorporate the Village of Acton was read the second and third time and passed.

"Mr. Barber moved, seconded by Mr. Clay, that the sum of $100 be paid out of the general funds of this county to the Treasurer of the Village of Acton, as soon as he may be legally appointed. Yeas: Barber, Clay, Kennedy, McEnery and Waldie. Nays: Buck, Clements, Elliot, Foster, McCraney, Ramsay and Robinson. and finally from the issue of the Canadian Champion of Jan. 29, 1874.

"Mr. Warren moved seconded by Mr. Clay, that the sum of fifty dollars each be granted to the villages of Acton and Burlington on application therefore by the reeves of those municipalities. Carried."

PEREMPTORY NOTICE.

There are still a few people who have not paid their taxes for 1873. These must positively be paid by the 20th inst., or go into Court. No further delay.

S. ZIMMERMAN, Collector.

Acton, Feb. 9, 1876.