

A hot time in the old town tonight

There were socials, parties and bees aplenty in 1874.

The Strawberry Festival, under the auspices of the Sons of Temperance, was held in the Drill Shed last Thursday evening. About four hundred people were present. The Hall was beautifully decorated with evergreens and streamers and the tables were loaded with delicious strawberries, 200 baskets of which quickly disappeared from sight. The Choir was then occupied by Mr. Chas. Dean, who opened the intellectual part of the programme with a few appropriate remarks. A lively air by Acton Brass Band came next in order, then a song by the Temperance Choir, Miss Nicklin presiding at the organ. Miss E. Cameron gave "Ida Grey" and Miss E. S. Hill "Touch Not the Cup When it Sparkles", both of which were well rendered and heartily received. Rev. T. Wilkinson of Nassagaweya gave a short address, urging the claims of Temperance, in a fluent manner. He advised the ladies not to allow themselves to be led to the Hymenal altar by a man who drinks intoxicating liquors. Air by the Band; song by the choir; a duet - "Father is a Drunkard and Mother is Dead" by Misses Watson and Storey was well done; song "Annie on the Banks o' Dee" by Miss E. Cameron received loud applause. Rev. Mr. Calvert of Acton gave a brief and appropriate address.

The playing of the band afforded a good opportunity for promenading, which all appeared to enjoy. The proceeds of the entertainment amounted to \$50.

Hall

Bell's Hall, over the Rossin House (Station Hotel) was used for dances, travelling shows and auctions. Bell's hall is now Acton Woodcraft building.

This was the first armoury of the Company of Halton Battalion, organized in 1866, the year of the Fenian Raids. By 1874 the men no longer wore the regulation British red tunics, but serviceable bottle green. Harness maker Charlie Dean gave his red jacket to glove maker Kate Kennedy and she made a sensation when she fashioned it into a mantle. They were soon married! One of the old red coats which belonged to Frank Melatosh is on display in Halton county museum.

Drill shed

The drill shed was built in 1867 and here the men drilled. This building was later moved, to everyone's satisfaction, to the park where it now acts as the poultry building on fair day. Mr. and Mrs. Earl Lambert's house was later built on the Bower Ave. site.

The huge block bounded by Mill, Wilbur, Church and the G.T.R. tracks was "the commons" Acton's only

park. It was the cricket field and later baseball field when that sport became popular. Here Company No. 6 drilled. The first fireworks shown in Acton were set off here and it was the rallying point for the Calithumpian and 12th of July parades for years.

Ransom Adams, a nephew of the original settlers, also piled hundreds of cords of wood here aside the track and sold it to the railway. Acton was the main source of supply between Toronto and Stratford in those years for the wood-burning engines. He had just one bad fire in all the wood and the villagers kept it from spreading by carrying away all they could, creating two gaps the fire could not jump.

Temperance goat

The Sons of Temperance were one of the busiest groups in town, with their own fine large hall. They were a practical and enthusiastic group and had a strong influence in the village.

The hall was moved from Main St. where it stood emblematically by the crystal-clear stream, to the corner of Church and John in 1870. The hall was used as a council chamber until the splendid new town hall was built.

Strawberry festivals were always held in the Sons of Temperance Hall. An organ was purchased for the many programs here.

In the course of time the churches organized Young People's Societies, and these gradually took the place of the old Temperance Hall. And these societies continued to insist on the old principle of temperance, too.

To the members' regret, the group disbanded and the house was sold to one of its trustees, John Cameron. He remodelled into houses which are still there, tenanted by the De Jong and Matthews families on Church St.

Walker Lodge was organized, and met in their hall above Kennedy's shoe store on Main St.

Gardens

Home gardens kept everyone busy; they were essential. Many kept chickens and pigs, and some families sent their barefoot boys out into the neighboring fields for the family cow at dinner time.

The Free Press regularly advised its readers to be considerate and keep their livestock off the streets.

Mostly the flowers were old-fashioned perennials, roses and lilies. Sweet William, honeysuckles, Johnny-Jump-Ups, bachelor button, geraniums and small clove pinks. There were a few dahlias and English marigolds. When Mrs. Secord secured an Oriental poppy she prized it greatly.

The gardens on Main and Mill were gradually converted to business purposes.

Fashionable wedding. A social note from the Free Press.



THESE FINE LOOKING young men were the winners of the 1947 Intermediate "C" Ont. Baseball championship. Starting at the back row, left, is: F. Dawkins, R. Footitt, C. Lindsay, J. Kentner, M. Tyler, J. Royston, P. Chaubin, O. Masales, L.

Robinson, L. Evans, R. Mason and J. Goy. In the front row: N. Morton, S. Snyder, R. Anderson, L. Masters, P. Woods, D. Ryder, J. Waterhouse, W. Waterhouse.

Quite a flutter of excitement pervaded the elite of our village on Wednesday morning. A fashionable wedding was on the tapis, and before nine o'clock many people were seen going toward to Episcopal church.

The bride and groom. Though comparative strangers here, were reputed to be young, handsome and of high social standing. The bride is a niece of Sidney Smith Esq. of this village.

When W. D. Lyon was returned to the Ontario Assembly for Halton in 1875 the Free Press wrote. The news of the result of the election Tuesday evening caused many of Mr. Lyon's friends here to wax jubilant. Wax candles were in brisk demand for illumination and old boxes and barrels were waxed round pretty lively to build a bonfire with. The Lyon was rampant and earthenware at a discount.

Monthly fair

Shortly after incorporating it was decided Acton should have a monthly fair and the first was in July 1875. There were about 100 cattle on the ground, beside several loads of sheep and pigs, and a number of horses, nearly all of which changed hands at good prices. The grounds were described as well fenced in and near the centre of the village.

Prices included \$52 to Robert Aikins of Nassagaweya for a steer and

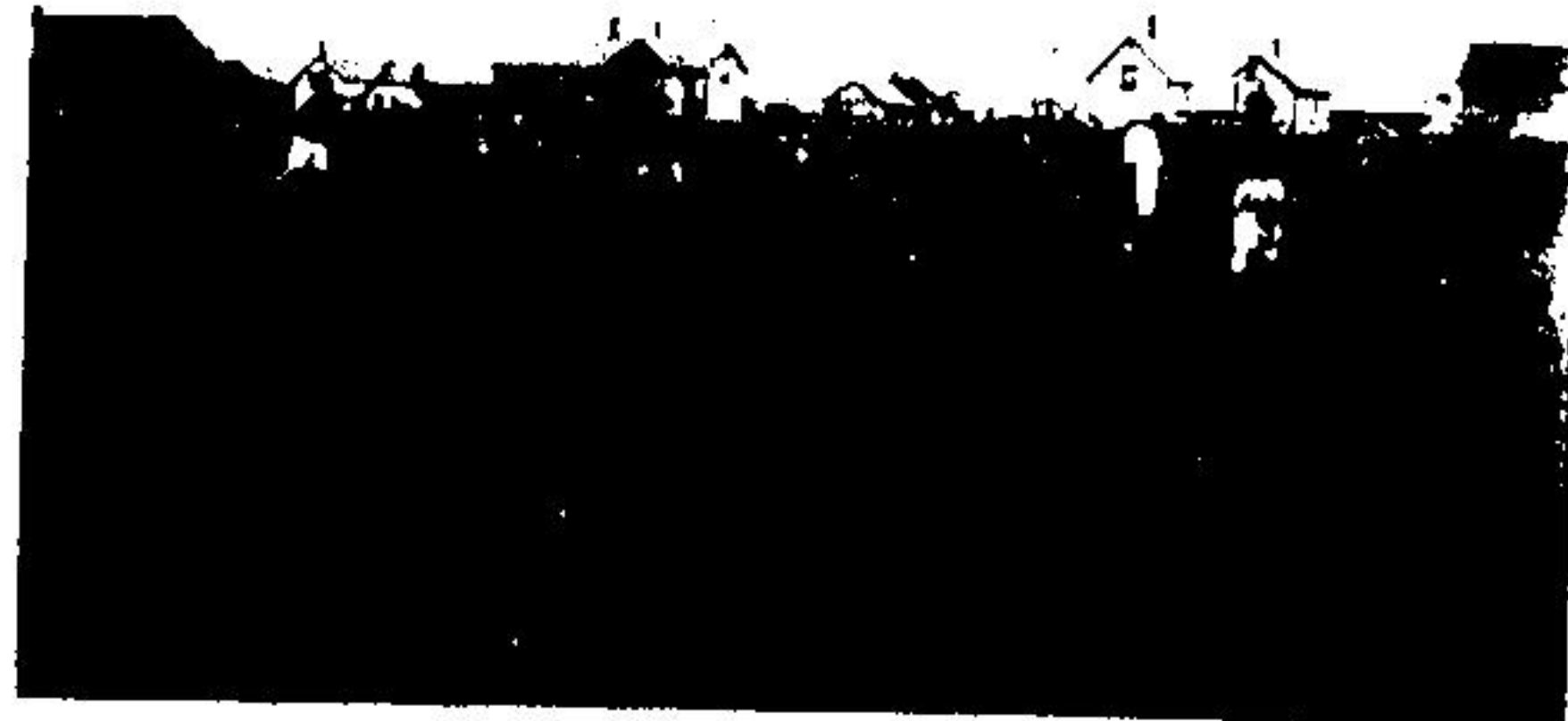
heifer; \$33 to Abram Stocker for a milch cow. Horse trading was also carried on to a considerable extent.

Our merchants were as busy as bees and we presume sold great quantities of goods as well.

The Free Press advised parents to keep their young children off the streets while the fair was on!



LADIES' BALL team of 1929 - front row Ethel James, Phyllis Tyler, Lottie Mason, Mary Chalmers, Margaret McDonald, back row Margaret Price, Jean Smith, Enid McGill, Nora Waterhouse. There were women's hockey teams years ago too



FIELD lacrosse at the park, about 1897.



ACTON SOCCER team of 1911: group includes John Wood, Charles Holmes, Nels Gardiner, Murray McDonald, Sidney Gunton, Neil McDonald.