



Booths, displays in arena brought crowds



4-H entries at Acton fair Saturday afternoon were excellent

I've just finished a book called "Ten Lost Years". In my opinion, it should be required reading for every Canadian under twenty-five, and pleasant, if occasionally bitter reading, for everyone over fifty. The rest are too old to care, and too late to save.

With another depression coming up, and remember, you read it here, it might serve as some sort of survival chart for the young people heading into the next depression, and a justification for the older people, who are so hymic about such things as electric lights that aren't turned off, food scraps that are thrown out, and clothing that is perfectly good but ten years out of style.

It's impossible to tell young people about your own experiences in the Great Depression. And it deserves the capital letters.

When you try to tell the rising generation about your own Depression experiences, they merely groan, roll their eyes, and think, "Yuk. Here goes Dad, or Grandad, again, whining about what hard times are really like. What a drag!"

That's why the young people should read the book. They simply can't realize, as they scoff their two-bits worth of french fries, that grown men worked ten hours a day for that same two-bits, during the Depression.

They can't realize, as they shoot a quarter into the pop machine for a Coke (capital C) to wash down their french fries, that if you took out a girl during the Depression, and had a quarter in your pocket, you were rich.

According to the book, the hardest hit areas were the Prairie Provinces, the Maritimes and Quebec. Ontario and B.C. were the only provinces in those days which weren't in really desperate condition, and they were bad enough.

This is a very credible book, to anyone who lived through those Ten Lost Years. The author went out with a tape recorder and interviewed hundreds of people who went through them. The results are funny, tragic, and extremely Canadian. It could never be misunderstood as a British or American book, though these countries suffered equally.

Canadians then, in their pawkish, stubborn and often stupid pride, would go to almost any lengths to avoid "going on relief." This was almost a sin, and always a last resort. And "relief" could be ten or twelve dollars a month, for a family. A nickel had to do the work of a dollar.

After three years of drought and grasshoppers, many prairie farmers just walked away and left everything: house and machinery. The average cash income from farmers in the Maritimes, including the wealthy ones, was something like 40 dollars a year. What a modern kid from a middle-class family would spend in a month on clothes and treats. People died, not of starvation, but of malnutrition.

Oh, I remember! I was only a kid at the time, but I remember. It all happened sort

Bill Smiley



of gradually. My father was a fairly prosperous merchant, but he was too kindly a man, bless him, to crunch people who were hard up. He gave them credit. He lost his business. He had too much money on the books, and not enough in the till to meet the mortgage.

Stunned, in his late forties with five kids, he sank into depression. There were no jobs for anyone, let alone middle-aged men. My mother took over.

She took in boarders. In the summer, we rented rooms to tourists. A clean bed and a huge breakfast for \$1.50. She sold homemade baking. She was an Avon lady. And we went inexorably into debt: the butcher's, the grocer's, the coal man. But there was no way WE were going to go on relief. It was shameful.

Somehow, we staggered through. My older brother got a job in the bank at six dollars a week. My sister got a job in a store at eight dollars a week. They kicked most of it back to my mum. That was the deal in those days, everybody pulling together. But

it was mighty hard on the young workers, who, today, would be going to college on government grants.

We never went hungry. A lot of hamburger, at three pounds for a quarter. A lot of baloney. A big, perpetually simmering pot of soup. If the porridge wasn't finished in the morning, it went into the soup pot.

And I remember the odd time when we had something I've never tasted since. This was when the butcher would advance no more credit, and there wasn't a cent in the house. Potato-skin hash.

I wouldn't mind a good feed of that tonight. You take some baked potatoes and put them through the meat grinder. With the color of the potato skins, it comes out looking like meat and potatoes. Fry it up in a pan with some onions, dirt cheap, and you had a pretty good dinner. Top it off with home-made bread and raspberry preserves, and you'd had a gourmet dinner.

It beat hell out of the modern frozen TV dinner, both for nourishment and flavor and was probably better for us than most of the garbage modern kids eat.

No, we never went hungry, and there was always a bowl of pea soup and home-made bread for the hoboes who arrived at the kitchen door, half-frozen and half-starved.

But I never realized what miracles my mother and father performed in those days, and I wish I had, sooner.

### It's a good year

Likely only one more event will be tied in with Acton's centennial year, the opening of the Lions pool.

The year's events have been a far cry from the first bright, hopeful plans formulated by an enthusiastic committee over a year back. And Acton has done much less than other towns our size to celebrate the milestone.

It's hard to tell what caused the change. The switch to regional government and the lack of a council of our own surely must have been a big factor.

Anyway, our centennial year continues to be a good one.

## Praise warms officials

One thing that warmed the temperature at the fair Saturday and Sunday was the glowing praise for this year's fair. Fair board officials are tired out, but still basking in that glow.

A town with diminishing identity found itself again on the weekend, and it seemed the entire population of Acton and district flocked to the fairgrounds to spend a few hours together.

There seemed to be more from out-of-town than ever, resulting in a kind of do-it-yourself reunion, failing an organized one.

Records were broken at the gate

and the crowd on Sunday was a surprise.

Concern about Sunday opening is completely dispelled. There would have been thousands at the fair grounds again, if we had had warmth. As it was the crowds who did come showed the officials the future possibilities and they started planning for next year already.

Exhibits and booths could easily have been open again Sunday. The variety show could be stressed - there are several inviting possibilities.

Another innovation, the Lions

refreshment tent (watch that word that shouldn't be used) was also successful.

Sunday opening and the Lions project had produced some criticism when first suggested. We doubt if many complaints remain.

The extension of the fair to Sunday differed from Milton's three day concept, which this year included Thursday as well as Friday and Saturday.

Surely Sunday is the more reasonable family day.

It was a great three days for the town centennial.

## Free Press Editorial Page

### Editorial notes

We're sorry to lose Jennifer Barr's breezy column Let's Talk About Horses this week. It reflected the great increase in interest in horses in this district - an interest shown in the horse entries at this year's fair.

Jennifer has too many other irons in the fire right now. But she'll continue to write feature stories and take pictures in the district. She was right out in the middle of the fair horse ring on the weekend taking pictures of the winners for the Free Press. And she led her two darkeys the full

parade route - another real accomplishment!

Thanks for everything!

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All of 200,000 people are expected at the International plowing match this week, three miles south of Georgetown, and plenty of them will be from this district. Halton Hills will have a display, and brochures will be handed out so people from other places can get to know us. And maybe we'll even get to know ourselves a little better! How many people in Acton or

Esqueusing, for instance, could name all the Halton Hills councillors?

The leaflet will tell you.

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The new minister at Trinity United, Eric Nelson, really made his mark in Acton in no time. He came up from his basement study in the church, (his mind on a sermon no doubt) and stepped right into the middle of a newly-laid cement step at the front door.

## The Free Press Back Issues

### 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press October 14, 1954

Work started yesterday morning on one of the several new subdivisions for new homes in Acton.

Bartlett Building Co. of St. Catharines moved in equipment on the subdivision on Queen Street west, locally known as Cobble Hill. Ten homes will be constructed in this section in the price range under \$10,000.

Seven of the 12 night school courses offered in Acton will be held, it was decided at a meeting of the Halton night school management committee Tuesday evening in Milton high school. Of the total of 332 applications received in Acton, Milton and Georgetown, 109 were for classes in Acton.

Police investigated four auto accidents in this district Sunday involving nearly \$2,000 property damage and three others before and after the Thanksgiving weekend. No serious injuries were reported.

It was learned arrangements have been made in the district for one of the color tours sponsored by a Toronto paper to include parts of Halton county this week. It is expected the tour will include Eden Mills, Rockwood, and Campbellville, where an outdoor church service is planned for 3 p.m. Depending on the weather one to two thousand cars may be on the tour.

A syndicate composed of Ontario and New York men has acquired property at Terra Cotta and hopes to establish a million dollar industry there. It is expected that a brick plant will employ over 50 men and will be in full operation by next spring.

### 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, September 25, 1924.

It was announced on Saturday by the Senate of the University of Toronto that William P. G. Hackett, a recent graduate of the Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute, has been awarded the John McCrae Scholarship, the value of which is approximately \$1,100 cash. This scholarship was open to all pupils of the Guelph High School.

Dr. J. M. Waters, of India, was the preacher at the seventy-ninth anniversary of Knox Church last Sunday. The Dr. has been a very successful medical missionary in India for many years, and his efforts are ably seconded by Mrs. Waters. His information concerning the methods pursued in reaching the people with the gospel; and the success achieved gave a very vivid glimpse of the romance of modern missions.

Last Friday afternoon the farm house of Mr. William J. Ritchie, lot 21, concession 4, Esqueusing, was destroyed by fire. It is thought the fire originated from a spark from the chimney falling upon the kitchen roof. A small quantity of the furniture and effects were removed, but the loss of household goods is heavy. The house and contents were insured. A phone message was sent to Messrs. Beardmore & Co.'s tannery for assistance. A crew of their firemen responded at once with their chemical extinguisher, but by the time they arrived the fire was beyond control. The Ritchie property is near Mr. John Stalker's, and the homeless family have been made comfortable there for the present. Mr. Ritchie will erect temporary quarters until they make preparations to build a new house next summer.

### 75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, October 5, 1899.

The Twentieth Century Thanksgiving Fund movement was put into practical operation here last Sunday and the results are highly satisfactory and encouraging.

Sermons were preached morning and evening by Rev. Dr. Carman, General Superintendent of the Church. Subscriptions and collections were taken for the Twentieth Century Thanksgiving Fund, which in all cases are above and distinct from all offerings for the regular circuit and connexional funds.

The class recently advanced from Miss C. McPhail's room to the principal's made the former the recipient last week of a very pretty gift in the form of a set of glove, collars and cuffs boxes, and a pin tray. Miss McPhail appreciated very much their kindness of heart.

Mr. A. P. Symon, who is about to remove his family to the southwest, will sell his household goods by auction on Saturday at the house of Mrs. Ross, West Bower Avenue, Wm. Hemstreet, auctioneer.

The Municipal Council met on Monday evening in regular session and transmitted all necessary business in seven minutes. All the members were present except Councillor Murray.

In addition to the eight new street lights which the Fire and Light Committee are arranging for, a number of private lights are being put in and other citizens are considering the matter.

Rev. Dr. Carman's address to the Sunday School last Sunday afternoon is one which the scholars and workers will long remember, both for its loving sentiment and impressive exhortation to choose Christ.

