

Symon family business in Acton since 1860s



THE JAMES SYMON FAMILY poses for studio photo. (L-R) James (1864-1935), Jack, Charles, "Mac", Marguerite and Elizabeth Symon (1874-1957).

Halton Sketches
by John McDonald

Charles and James Symon, natives of Scotland, were the forerunners of a long tradition of Symons in the business history of Acton.

Charles was a lumberman and held the contract to supply railroad ties for the Toronto-Guelph Railway (later purchased by the Grand Trunk). Acton was at one time the centre of a large lumbering business and during the 1860s Charles and brother "Jimmie" operated a grocery store which stood at the site of the present Bank of Montreal.

In 1872, the business was sold to Messrs. D. D. Christie and David Henderson of Milton. Charles Symon and family relocated to Parry Sound where he acted as manager of the newly formed Guelph Lumber Company.

Charles died at Parry Sound in 1879 and at the age of 14, the eldest son James assumed responsibility for the household with his mother, Mrs. Charles Symon (1842-1910) and family returned to the Acton area in the early 1880's. She was Helen Brown Allan and it was at the Allan farm on the Second Line directly above Acton that the mother and children took up residence.

The new generation of Symon brothers attempted many business ventures in the area, including an onion crop on the Quantis farm (near the Olympia take-out restaurant) on Queen Street.

The Symon Brothers' grocery store prospered for many years.

An issue of the Acton Free Press dated February 1897 dubs the enterprise "Cheap Cash Store" and announces that effective March 1st "business will be strictly cash." A barrel of choice apples was given to any purchaser of \$10 worth of goods paid in cash within the month. Alec Symon and brother-in-law Robert Campbell were partners in a jewelry business on Mill Street at the present location of Johnston Real Estate.

The eldest son James (1864-1935) married Elizabeth MacPherson (1874-1957) on the MacPherson farm, now owned by Beardmore and Company. The newlyweds moved to Guelph for a number of years where James acted as a "traveller" or sales representative for two Kitchener glove manufacturers.

In 1905 this branch of the Symon family moved back to Acton and James purchased the hardware business of Reg Johnstone. "Reg" was the son of William Johnstone, the undertaker in Acton for many years. The location of the hardware business on Mill Street was known as Bradley's Meat Market for many years and now it houses a pool supply business.

It was Symon's Hardware in Acton that supplied all hardware goods for the

Toronto Suburban Railway which operated through the Halton Hills area between 1917 and 1931. A purchasing agent for the "radial" line enquired about a piece of railroad hardware at the Symon store when the line was being surveyed. He was amazed to find that James Symon not only had access to the item but was also familiar with the functions of hardware unique to the railroad industry.

The lovely brick residence known as 30 Willow Street was built for James Symon in 1915. A family story relates that a stove was sold from the house to the construction crew of the "radial" line. Apparently at the time of sale the stove was still burning wood and Mrs. Symon had to rescue some baking from the oven while it was being carried out the door!!!

Symon Hardware was later relocated down Mill Street and shortly after James' death in 1935, Mrs. Symon arranged for the erection of the brick building on Mill Street which presently houses Acton Home Hardware. It was on this site that Acton's first movie house was built by William Johnstone and operated by Morris Saxe and later H. S. Holmes.

James' son "Mac" Symon and daughter Marguerite worked for their mother in the hardware business until her death in 1957, and eventually "Mac" assumed control of the business.

Symon Hardware was sold in 1972 to Mike Kinal who now operates Acton Home Hardware on the same premises.

The Symon family, early business pioneers, have contributed to the history of Acton and area for over a century.



CHARLES SYMON (1830-1879). It was Charles and brother "Jimmie" who started a century of business history in Acton for the Symon family.

Grass seeding for new ditch

Halton Hills works committee decided Monday to put some grass seed in a new ditch in front of Jack Pemberton's Choicelea Farm, R.R. 4 Acton, property.

Mr. Pemberton sent a letter to the town this week complaining about the looks of the new ditch which was dug by the town works staff recently.

Councillor Len Cox said he realized that a new ditch can be a bit of a shock after having had a nice piece of lawn there.

Engineer Robert Austin noted that residents in the area had complained about drainage problems and that was why the ditch was built.

New pail for corner

A big, conspicuous garbage pail has been placed at the Mill-Main corner, where litter has been annoying passers-by and the police. Now the people who sit on the bench at the corner in the evenings try to hit the pail with their cans and candy wrappers... and often they're successful.

The petunias in the planter at the corner had been suffering badly, too, and it's expected the convenient garbage can will give them a longer bloom expectancy.

Computerized accounts confusing council

Computer print-outs of the town's monthly accounts are causing problems for some members of Halton Hills council. It was decided at the August 5 meeting of council that the finance committee should take another look at the system.

Councillor Ern Hyde told the meeting that when the system was first developed he had complained because he had difficulty reading the print-outs and he was still having problems.

"I think this has been developed for the benefit of the finance department. This may be simplified but with the old way we always were able to question the accounts and found ways to save money. I can't remember an

account being questioned at council since we started doing this," Hyde said.

Councillor Pat McKenzie noted that lots of questions about accounts are still being asked at the committee level and thought there might even be more questions asked at the finance committee than there were with the old system.

Hyde pointed out he wasn't suggesting the finance committee isn't doing its job but was worried because council members were no longer raising questions about accounts.

Councillor Roy Booth said he agreed with Hyde and that few people question things which come out of a computer.

He explained that there had been a brief school in how to read the accounts for members of council and that he had failed the course and was still unable to read the computerized financial statements.

Hyde said that many members weren't doing their homework any more because they don't know how to read the accounts and noted "some of us just don't have accounting minds."

Councillor Mike Armstrong said he thought the new system was "fantastic."

McKenzie suggested the treasurer come to council and explain the computerized accounting system.

Councillor Russ Miller said the new system takes a lot

more time to read but added he thought it was a good system when he found the time to read the print-out.

Councillor Ernie Sykes

noted the town spent \$100,000 on the computer and he thought council should try to adapt to the new system. He didn't think there was any

reason to return to the old accounting system.

Council decided to have the finance committee reconsider the new system and see what can be done to help members of council read the print-outs.

Computer print-outs please committee

Members of Halton Hills finance committee were pleased with town treasurer Harry Henderson's newly designed compact computer print-outs which enabled them to check accounts in greater detail.

Henderson exhibited samples of the print-outs at Monday's committee meeting and explained how the system worked so members could find out the cost of each item, what it was and which department would be charged with the purchase. Committee members agreed the arrangement told the story and should satisfy the most inquisitive member of

council.

The treasurer also explained how he could feed digits through the computer and come up with answers on how much has been spent in each department up to date—a massive task under the old system where many man hours would have been required. "We can have an answer in seconds," said Henderson.

"It is much better than the crossword puzzles we were faced with before on Sunday mornings," said committee chairman Harry Levy. He also noted any errors which might be made would be human, not machine errors.

Sod turning at new centre

Construction of the new multi-million dollar Ontario Sports Training Centre, Bronte, will be marked by an official ground-breaking ceremony to take place on the site at 2 p.m. Wednesday, August 20.

M.P.P. Jim Snow will be joined by the Honourable Robert Welch, Minister of Culture and Recreation, to officiate at the sod-turning.

and visiting dignitaries will include Halton Region Chairman Allan Masson and Mayor Harry Barrett of the Town of Oakville.

A model of the Sports Training Centre will be on display, and associate architects Crang & Boake, designers of the first stage of development, will give a slide presentation.

Church near done

The Church St. reconstruction program should be completed this week, according to Halton Hills works department. Last on the list are the final topcoat, cleaning up the boulevards, final sodding and general clean-up. Then comes the approval by Halton Hills engineer.

Church Services

ACTON BAPTIST CHURCH
80 Mill Street East, Founded 1842
Pastor: Mr. Das Sydney B. Sc., M. Div.
Pastor's Phone—853-1835
Thursday 7:00 p.m.—Choir rehearsal
Sunday, August 17, 1975
11:00 a.m.—Morning Worship
Combined Service with Churchill Community Church.
Advance notice: Daily Vacation Bible School August 25-29th 8:30 p.m. each evening. All ages.

EVANGEL PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE
P.A.O.C. 33 Churchill Rd. N. Rev. S. M. Thoman, Pastor 853-2715
Sunday, August 17, 1975
10:00 a.m.—Sunday School
11:00 a.m.—Morning Worship
7:00 p.m.—See and hear Kathryn Kuhlman, Pat Robinson plus other international charismatic speakers in "sound" film "Jerusalem the 11", world conference on the Holy Spirit.
Tuesday 8:00 p.m.—Prayer Service and Bible Study
Friday 8:00 p.m.—Christ's Ambassadors.
ALL ARE WELCOME!
Excellent free town Bus Service for children and adults to and from Sunday School on the "All Red Bus". Also Rural pick-up. For information phone 853-2715 or 853-0766.
John 6:37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

MAPLE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH
177 Maple Ave., Georgetown (A Fellowship Baptist Church)
Sunday, August 17, 1975
9:45 a.m.—Sunday School for all ages
11:00 a.m.—Morning Worship
6:30 p.m.—Evening Fellowship
Thought—Peace rules the day when Christ rules the mind.
A Friendly Welcome Awaits You

THE CHURCH OF ST. ALBAN THE MARTYR
1872—Anglican—1974 Corner Willow St. and St. Alban's Dr. Rev. Leonard Ewing Rector
Director of Music Mrs. Frank Oakes
Sunday, August 17, 1975
10:00 a.m.—Service of Holy Eucharist—Rector
Thursday evening 7:30 p.m.—Holy Eucharist

BETH-EL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
(Churchill Rd. and Hwy. 7)
Minister: Rev. J. Corvers
Sunday, August 17, 1975
Sunday Worship Services at 10:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.
Preschool Sunday School during the morning service.
Sunday School during the afternoon service.
You are welcome

CHURCHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH
Churchill Road North
Minister: The Rev. A. Walter Fosbury, B.A., M. Div. 124 Tidey Avenue Phone 853-2386
Sunday, August 3 to 24th, 1975
11:00 a.m.—Union Service with Acton Baptist Church.
Sunday, August 31 st 10:30 a.m.—Worship Service at Churchill.
Sermon subject: "A Message for Labour Day"
The church on the hill is an interdenominational congregation, ministering to the needs of the community.
All Welcome

BAHA'I FAITH
You are warmly invited to attend a fireside discussion Friday evenings at 8:30 p.m. Phone 877-3477.
The fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity, and unity is essential if we would reach truth, for truth is one.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA KNOX CHURCH, ACTON
Rev. Andrew H. McKenzie, B.A., B.D.—Minister
Mr. E. A. Hansen, B.A. Organist and Choir Master
Thirteenth Summer Session of Combined Worship Services in Knox Presbyterian Church Acton.
Preacher: Rev. Andrew H. McKenzie, B.A., B.D.
Sunday, August 17, 1975
10:00 a.m.—Public Worship Nursery for babies and toddlers.
EVERYONE WELCOME

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA TRINITY CHURCH, ACTON
Rev. W. Eric Nelson, M.A., B.D.—Minister
Dr. George Elliott, M.A., Ph.D. Director of Music

Pet of the week



SQUEAKER IS A baby Mallard duck who was not more than a week old when he scrambled up onto the creek bank behind the McDonald home on Church St. W. Until the duck is old enough to look after itself, 11-year-old Ann McDonald is looking after it. The duck swims every night in the pond and feeds on oatmeal and milk, devouring the odd mosquito or bug.

NEED MONEY for a SUMMER VACATION?




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The Acton Free Press

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