

Free Press Editorial Page

The first passenger train

The first train whistled through Acton in 1856—one hundred and nineteen years ago. What a source of pride that must have been!

Acton people soon depended on the rails for speedy, frequent passenger service, for mail several times a day, for shipment of animals and foodstuffs as well as

the regular freight. The tanneries built their own sidings for shipping by rail.

But the last few decades has seen the gradual erosion of rail service. Bit by bit, there was less at the site of the fine old station, built in 1905 following a petition of the townspeople.

Failing quality evident

The failing quality of service by the Canadian National Railways had become evident. Yet Acton people had opposed the proposed changes right along the line.

At the hearings in Guelph by the Railway Transport Committee, not only passengers but Acton council, the Chamber of Commerce and a group of high school students presented briefs asking continued rail passenger service here.

But last week an announcement was bluntly made that there will be no more passenger train service for Acton. The cancelled commuter train was the last passenger train left that stopped in town.

There was no reference to the people concerned here, and indeed CN figures showed very few made use of the commuter train anyway.

There has been a feeling for a long time that the end of passenger service was coming inevitably.

Even when the hearings were held in Guelph a couple of years ago there was a general feeling of hopelessness.

Back in 1955 there were 11

passenger trains a day stopping in Acton. By 1965 there were four. Now—two. In five weeks, none.

In 1965 there was passenger service, freight and telegraph service, with a station agent and operator.

In November of 1967 the telegraph, passenger and freight services were all centralized in Guelph, leaving only the agent at Acton. He had no duties. Not even a phone. But he lasted until 1968.

Passenger and freight use dwindled, of course.

CN methods which contributed to the phasing out of passenger service were annoying, and yet not easy to document. For instance, when the station closed, Acton passengers had to phone long distance to Guelph for information. They didn't hear of timetable changes.

At hearings as far back as 1968 Acton service was termed "shocking" and "rotten" before the Railway Transport Committee.

Naturally people looked toward other means of travel.

Station closed and sold

The station was closed and shuttered. A little glass cubicle was built.

The Lions club bought the station from the CN. Although other similar stations in other towns have been moved and treasured, Acton's station was sold by the club in 1973 for scrap, when they figured it would be too costly to move it.

When all the services were here, CN revenue in Acton was estimated to range from \$20,000 and \$40,000 each month. Acton used to be a top source of express and freight on the line.

Now Beardmore has ripped up its rails from its old sidings. Everything goes by truck.

Columnist Wendy Thomson took a ride on our commuter train at the time of the hearings in Guelph, reporting on the oldish trains with their lack of amenities.

The reasoning behind the change is strange to understand when we see the alternative—a GO bus to a GO train that runs on the very same rails, through the very same places—but stopping at Georgetown on its way west from Toronto instead of going on through Acton, Rockwood and Guelph.

Why not GO all the way?

A GO train from Toronto right through to Guelph has been hoped for all through the slow death of CN passenger service as we used to know it.

More trains than there are now

out of Georgetown would attract more riders, too. Those trains keep strict commuter hours for people with city jobs.

Right now the CN finds this fuller GO service uneconomical.

Perhaps the best idea?

Judging by their concern for economy, there's always another suggestion that could just prove the best solution of them all.

With passengers and freight an obvious nuisance to the railroad, perhaps the best alternative would be for private enterprise to buy that long thin site, tear up the

tracks, pave the right of way and use it for buses and trucks? Well . . .

There will be a spell when only freights rumble through Acton. But surely the GO service will be extended and the tracks will hum again when passengers take the old, old route that has served Acton well since 1856.

Jottings

In the midst of a glorious Indian summer week, Colin MacColl was amazed to see a flock of about 60 grosbeaks near his home alongside the lake. It's about a month too early for grosbeaks to be here, and he thinks it's a sign of an early winter.

There's no use in a newspaper hearing about news when it's all over! We depend very much on people letting us know what's going on.

Others who need help, as well as the newsroom writers, are the rural correspondents. Please phone these people with any interesting items of news you may have, especially if you are a newcomer to the area. Dozens of new families are moving in to Acton and district, and we are conscious of the fact we haven't got to know them all yet.

OUR READERS WRITE:

Office of the High Commissioner for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ottawa, Canada, K1N 8J6, September, 29, 1975

The Editor, Free Press, Acton, Ontario.

Dear Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the editorial under the heading "Our Commonwealth Cousins" which appeared in your esteemed daily on September 3, 1975. The editorial has inadvertently classified Bangladesh as a "non-Commonwealth" country. You might be interested to know that Bangladesh was admitted as a member of the Commonwealth of Nations on April 18, 1972. Since then Bangladesh enthusiastically participated in all sorts of Commonwealth affairs.

Yours Sincerely, Abdul Quayyum First Secretary.

Dear Ms.

Rockwood, Ontario has been blessed with municipal water and sewers. . . for the good of the community we are told. . . it's the only answer we are assured. . . better now than later, we are advised.

Recommendations from experts, an opinion costly to challenge. . . from developers, with little to lose and much to gain. . . from non-residents, who can turn their back on our fate.

A select three-man committee was appointed to assist individual residents in correcting their faulty systems. Systems which have been allowed to become faulty through non-action by local authorities. However, the committee felt that the most expedient answer was to install community water and sewers. Not necessarily the most economical nor the most effective, but the most expedient.

In my opinion, there was a recommendation for rape.

Thank you, R. J. Smith, Rockwood.



Sugar and Spice by bill smiley

Perhaps, with Thanksgiving in the air, it's as good a time as any to make a personal inventory of what we have to be thankful for, if anything. Maybe you'd like to join me, substituting your minuses for mine, your pluses for mine.

On second thought, I haven't really a single minus. Oh, there are a lot of little nuisances: arthritis in my foot; rambling bursitis in shoulders, knees and neck; dewlaps; a few less teeth than I'd like.

But everybody has these things. If we didn't, we wouldn't appreciate how great it is when the pains clear up for a few days, or the fact that there's always plenty of good grub to mumble with those ancient molars.

I do have some negative thankfuls. I'm glad I am, by choice, not living in a city, with everything that entails in the line of

human harassment: dirt, traffic, crowds, coldness. Especially when I can, as right now, look out my window and see the yellow October sun blazing into the gaudy flamboyance of the maples, and a little further off, the blue of clean, unpolluted water, and know that if I stepped outside, the air would be champagne, not cheap, scented wine.

I'm glad I don't have six children. Two of them almost brought the Old Lady and me to our knees, economically and emotionally.

I'm grateful that I haven't got stuck into some job that I loathe, as so many men have. What could be more soul-destroying than hating to go to work every morning?

I'm glad I'm not sick, or feeble, or pot-bellied, or ham-handed, or tight-fisted, even though I am bow-legged, forgetful and sometimes, after a sharp exchange with my wife, have a ringing in my ears.

Those are just a few of the negative thankfuls. They are vastly outweighed, to the point where it is no contest, by the positive thankfuls.

I couldn't begin to list them in this space, but will touch on a few of the highlights.

I'm extremely grateful, even though it should last only a few more years, that, despite the machinations of the oil companies and the stupidity and shortsightedness of our "leaders", I can still turn up the thermostat on a cold morning and know that I and mine will not shiver through the day.

I am extremely thankful that I am not a young man, recently married, mortgaged to the ears for life, in an effort to provide a roof and food for a family.

It's taken 30 years of slaving on the old plantation, toting many a barge and lifting many a bale, but I own my own house and don't owe anybody a nickel, and I'm grateful.

Another thing to be thankful for is the fatherly benevolence of Pierre Trudeau and his gang (I use the word gang advisedly). They and their provincial and municipi-

pal henchmen are content with separating me from only about half of every dollar I make, and there is no indication yet that they will shortly want an arm and a leg each year as additional tribute. Only a few toes and fingers.

I'm very thankful that I live in Canada. It's a magnificent country; a people who could be magnificent, but refuse; and they don't throw you in jail for speaking disparagingly of the gang in power. (They haven't got enough jails, and who would pay the rent?)

I'm happy with my immediate family, though thousands wouldn't be. My son is a failure, in the ordinary middle-class sense. He has never made more than \$2,000 a year, has no home, except ours, and couldn't produce the proverbial pot. But he is working with ultra-poor peasants in a South American country, trying to make a better life for them, eating their food, catching their diseases, and I'm proud of him.

My daughter, after adventures in the sub-centre that make me shudder still, knocked them dead with her writing in a university course, got her degree, is in fourth year of a second degree in music, has had a baby, and is about to produce a sister for Pokey, my grandbaby, who is a whippersnapper, like all grandbabies. Not bad for a rotten kid.

My wife (careful now, Buster, watch it) is still a smashing looking woman, though a granny, an excellent cook, great company, and is becoming virtually serene. She hasn't thrown anything at me for nearly two years, except a wet dishcloth or something like that. It used to be plates of food, telephones, Eaton's catalogue, you name it. She did, actually, throw my typewriter downstairs last year, when I made some mild remark about the bad temper she used to have, but she didn't throw it at me. That's progress.

I like my job, working with kids, who are at least alive, not just going through the motions, like so many of their elders.

I have a few friends, whom I cherish, a few enemies, chiefly the town engineer, who does not cherish me, and a host of likeable contemporaries and acquaintances.

My blood pressure is great. I don't wear glasses, my heart hasn't given me a bad knock, I'm chipper as the average eighty-year old woman and I'm already at work on the book I didn't get around to writing last summer, or the one before, or . . .

It's just great to be alive, and I offer my sincere thanks to God or Whoever is responsible for it. How about you?



JOHN AND KAREN Bos of 46 Stevens Crescent in Georgetown were in Acton last Saturday having fun throwing leaves, playing on the see-saw at Prospect Park and fishing. The smell of autumn leaves burning and the colors blanketing the countryside make the thoughts of oncoming winter coldness easier to bear.

The Free Press Back Issues

20 years ago

Taken from the Issue of the Free Press, October 13, 1955

Honored on their 46th wedding anniversary at a surprise family gathering were Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Griffen. A Thanksgiving dinner was held Sunday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Thompson to mark the occasion. Those attending were Mrs. J. O. Martin, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Martin of Vineland; Mr. and Mrs. Howard MacArthur, Miss Mabel Peavoy, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Griffen, Mr. William MacArthur and Mrs. Herb Keeler, all of Erin; Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Davidson of Acton; Mrs. Tom Birney and Mr. Neil Birney of Sudbury called at the same home.

The public school was cleared in 59 seconds Wednesday morning when Acton firemen staged a surprise drill during Fire Prevention Week. Children were out of their classrooms in the old high school, old public school and the new wing in remarkably good time, according to Chief Sam Tennant.

Mrs. E. Holloway, Main St., was hostess to the Acton Women's Institute on Thursday, October 6. Mrs. George Fryer, the president, presided. The roll call was answered with "no early superstition".

The Sunshine Euchre Club gathered again at the home of Mrs. R. L. Davidson, when Mr. and Mrs. Frank Thompson were guests of honor. Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. A. K. Mann were joint hostesses.

Attending the wedding of Miss Anne Baker and Mr. Jack Mainprize in Westmount Quebec last Saturday from Acton were the groom's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Mainprize, Mr. Bill Mainprize, Mrs. G. A. Dills and Mr. David Dills.

50 years ago

Taken from the Issue of the Free Press, October 15, 1925

T. G. Ramshaw, an active Liberal worker in Milton and J. M. Mackenzie, head of the Conservative organization there, have made an election bet, that the loser must wear a silk hat up and down Main Street on election night. The bet is that Duncan Campbell, the Liberal candidate will be elected to represent this county. Neither of these two gentlemen is in the habit of wearing a silk hat.

Mr. Peter A. Smith was at Bracebridge last week on an important arbitration board to decide the price to be paid by the Board of Education for the new high school site, the arbitrators being George Tennant and Mr. F. Williams, of Bracebridge, and Peter A. Smith, Acton. The arbitrators' decision was for \$7500.

Misses Minnie Z. Bennett, Daisy Folster, Isabel Anderson, Nellie Anderson, Anne McDonald, Bessie Gardner and Mrs. M. H. Moore attended the Teachers' Convention at Guelph last week.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Johnston, Acton, announce the engagement of their only daughter, Edna Maude, to Mr. Melbourne C. Overholt, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Overholt, of Brantford, Ontario, the marriage to take place shortly.

Rev. Dr. Moore, of Toronto, visited his brother, Mr. H. P. Moore on Saturday afternoon, while enroute for Southampton, where he preached anniversary services on Sunday.

Miss Margaret Murray is leaving for Montreal this evening, where she will take the S.S. "Montcalm" for her home in Edinburgh, Scotland.

75 years ago

Taken from the Issue of the Free Press, Thursday, October 11, 1900.

Crewsons Corners — the hub of civilization, Rockwood, is greatly wrought over the proposed Toronto and Guelph radial railroad, because the proposed road is marked to go through the Corner and Eden Mills, and does not touch that hub of civilization and industry. It would never do to leave such a manufacturing centre as Rockwood out in the cold. The government should be petitioned not to let such a calamity overcome Rockwood.

The crowning event of the fair was the concert in the evening. The artists attracted a large crowd to the hall. One of the most appreciated numbers on the program was the cornet solo by little Miss Lottie Mason, accompanied on the piano by her twin sister Hazel. She responded to an encore with Bugle Call.

The receipts at the gate for the fair were \$400 and the concert receipts \$147. It is estimated there were at least 3,500 persons in attendance on Friday afternoon. The grand stand, which was free for all, was a favorite spot for the ladies.

The absence of fairs on the grounds was a commendable feature. One blackleg set up a wheel of fortune but he was promptly ordered off the grounds.

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