



Town Hall Tales

by Hartley Coles

Memories, memories... What resident doesn't remember the dances in the old town hall, the concerts with minstrel men, dramas, meetings and even borrowing a book when it was once used as a library? Maybe some unlucky people also spent a night in the jail cells, or were pulled up in front of Acton's one and only policeman for some breach of the peace.

It has always been the headquarters for the Acton fire brigade back to when the hand operated pumps were pulled by fire horses.

My memories only go back to what seemed a few short years when it represented the village and then Town of Acton to a child's mind. They go back to before World War II when minstrel shows and stage plays were produced and directed by local people. And the place was jammed to the rafters to see people they knew on stage.

Outside the Gregory Theatre where the latest screen thrillers were seen on Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights and a matinee thrown in Saturday, the town hall was the other mecca for entertainment. Jimmy Fox brought his travelling troupe to town and made the town hall his headquarters where some of the finest live acting this side of the Rockies was seen.

Back in the days when Acton had only a Continuation School with four grades—9, 10, 11, 12—instead of a high school, the town hall was the place where the school's At Home was staged. It was most young people's introduction to the dance and many first stumbling steps were taken across that floor with its pot-bellied stoves at each end, and stage across the middle. There the orchestra sat and played fox trots, waltzes, reels and some pretty fast stepping square dances. That old floor used to rock when the squares were called and the fiddles scraped and the men let out rebel war cries.

Sometimes there was some trouble when some of the boys who stepped out the back to take two or three swallows from a bottle, forgot their manners. The constables would ask the objectionable ones to leave peacefully. If they wouldn't they'd grab them by the scruff of the neck and almost hurl them down the stairs to cool off in the jail cells which held only occasional prisoners. When they sobered up they were allowed to go home with a warning.

The upstairs auditorium was always decorated for the fancy balls such as the firemen's annual, the At Home or a spring frolic sponsored by the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, bless them. No one came to the dances in jeans. You wore your best dress or suit for the occasion. For most people it was their only one.

I remember also some of the more serious matters which took place in the town hall such as the time Charlie Millard, who was international director of the United Steel Workers, and later a big shot in the CCF, gave an impassioned plea for more help for Mother Russia during World War II. Noticeable at the meeting were

many of the local leftists, then branded Reds.

Socialists were few and far between in those days and I went mostly out of curiosity to hear the well known Millard. I remember his glowing references to Russia and the social justice he felt was there. It was years before I knew how wrong he was. He was heartily applauded by wartime workers, who came to Acton from as far away as Mooseonee.

During the war years, too, they staged some of the best minstrel shows the town has ever seen. They are out of fashion now, but who can forget Jack "Baloney" Greer doing a fast shuffle across the stage while Joe Whitham, Scotty Burton, George Musselle and others crooned barbershop and southern melodies for appreciative audiences fed up with the shortages of the war years.

Remember the soup stock plays produced, written and directed by Bob Parker? Bob's son, Rob, of course, is a TV figure now, known across the breadth of the country. Remember some of the plays the YMCA and Y's Men used to stage with plenty of pretty girls? They had such names as Charlie's Aunt or something and always were sprinkled with humor.

Names I can remember that starred in these productions? How about Charlie Kirkness and George Mason, a pair who came straight from Mason Knit to charm audiences with droll humor.

Things got more sophisticated after the war years and the era of the big bands. Orchestras with such toney names as The Debonnaires with the emphasis on sax, (that was sax, typesetter) instead of fiddle, played for new generations of moon-struck teenagers.

But the old place is starting to lose its glamor. It was even getting a bit shoddy despite efforts of the village mandarins to keep it painted and the stage curtains in repair.

It wasn't long before only occasional dances were held there and few if any entertainments. Gregory Theatre became the Roxy and films were shown every night of the week except Sunday at the brand new entertainment palace. The occasional dance drew some ominous shudders from the town hall floor, which resulted in an investigation by an engineer.

Wasn't long before they said the upstairs was not only unsafe but unsuitable for expressions of the dance which used to shake the whole building.

Many of my memories are also downstairs where many of the council meetings of the Village and Town of Acton enacted by-laws and counted money to keep the taxes reasonable. They had only local subjects to discuss and there was always plenty to do. It surprised me when they decided a few more people could administer an area much larger and with eight times the population. Of course, they weren't counting municipal employees then. They were relied upon to work at all hours and be good at their jobs often without much formal training.

Never having belonged to the fire department, it would take pages of type to recount some of their memorable nights in old town hall.



AFGHAN DRAW

DETERMINED to reach the all-time high goal of \$12,000 this year, cancer society campaign chairman Arlie White tries to sell a ticket to Hugh Patterson at the volunteers' dinner Thursday.

Big Brothers plan Big Run

For the first time, there will be a Big Run for Little Brothers in Halton Hills.

On Sunday, June 11 there will be two runs, one in Acton and one in Georgetown, through the main streets. These are held in conjunction with the national Big Run for Little Brothers which starts in Victoria B.C. and St. John's, Newfoundland and ends in Ottawa on June 18. One of the national runners will be in Halton Hills on the day of the run here, on the way from Guelph to Bramp-ton.

The runners in each town will be getting sponsors for their runs. There are two prizes in the province, in which one runner and one sponsor may win \$1,000 each.

Since it's a first endeavor for the Halton Hills Big Brothers, they are hoping for a good response from the community, says organizer Larry Ciglen.

The Georgetown run begins at Cedarvale school and the Acton run at the high school, from 2 until 5 in the afternoon. The runners will leave at different times and proceed a determined route through the downtown. This avoids congestion on the highways.

Any person may participate, but under the age of 18 a participant must have parental consent and under 13, be accompanied by an adult.

All the schools with senior grades and high schools are participating, as well as some fitness groups.

The distance is about three miles, and sponsors will pay so much a mile. Big Brothers of Canada will bill the sponsors directly. Different from most sponsored events, when the participant has to do the collecting.

The run should take about three-quarters of an hour. The route will be marked and there will be check points. The Halton Hills Big

Brothers are hoping to raise \$1,000 in the project, Mr. Ciglen says, in their first try.

Jehovah's Witnesses all cleared to build

With approval by Halton Health Unit of a private sewage system and the Region of Halton on water supply, Jehovah's Witnesses had clear sailing at Halton Hills planning board this week.

The by-law allowing the project on 64 acres on Highway 7 by the Wildwood Road, was recommended by planning board.

Glen Howe, solicitor for International Bible Students Association of Canada, was ready to speak, but found it unnecessary.

The site, with more than 1,500 foot frontage on Highway 7, runs back to regional road 32, and is made up of two farms, 55 acres owned by the Jerry Lambert estate and 10 acres owned by Annette Milne.

The buildings, set back 900 feet from the road, would include a residence, printing

Scout, Guide Mothers plan euchre, bake table

A small group of mothers met at the Scout hall last Tuesday evening. Matters of business were brought forth and discussed. The Euchre night planned for Friday night, June 2, is in full swing. Prizes have been donated for the Euchre so all avid players are most welcome. A small lunch will be served at the closing of the evening. For further details please check the Coming Events column.

Back to Acton Days plans were discussed. The mothers will be having a bake sale booth in front of Simpson-Sears. All donations of baked goods may be brought to the booth Saturday, July 1, between 9:30 and 10 a.m. Our next meeting will be held June 20. We plan to go out for dinner and then back to the Scout hall for our last meeting before summer. Please feel welcome to come out for dinner with the mothers. We will meet at the Scout hall at 6:30. Hope to see you there!

Golden Age Club is on picnic committee

The Regular evening meeting of The Golden Age club was held at Luxton Hall, May 17. Bert Davidson opened the meeting and all joined in singing O Canada followed by the theme song. Secretary's report was read and adoption moved by Jean Precious seconded by Willa Morrison. The treasurer's report read and moved by Lena Mann seconded by Cam Leishman. There was discussion

rezone picnic to be held in July. Everyone is to think about what can be done for the turn at entertainment.

The meeting then was turned over to Ballinfad Choir. They entertained with selections by the men's choir, readings, a duet and a solo, also toe-tapping music and a square dance.

A luncheon of sandwiches, pickles, and tea closed another pleasant evening.

For Classifieds that reach, call The Acton Free Press

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BAKE SALE held by Town Hall Restoration committee drew an early morning crowd to their booths Saturday. Where was it held? Beside the town hall, of course.

Sunburns

Many people are now regretting their sunning and tanning from the past weekend, and are suffering from bad sunburns. Sunbathers should always remember to use a protective lotion to avoid bad burns. Even those who do not feel they are directly in the sun's rays should prepare for the worst.

The AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP meets at St. Joseph's Church Hall 64 Church E. Mondays at 8 p.m. Information 853-3310 After Hours 853-2504

"NOTICE"

Effective, Monday, June 5, 1978 twice weekly garbage pick-up will take place until September 24, 1978.

Acton residents whose garbage is normally picked up on Mondays will have a Monday and Thursday pick-up. The normal Tuesday pick-up will be changed to Tuesday and Friday.

Thank you, TOWN OF HALTON HILLS Works Department

Personals
Fred Lemon is a patient in Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto.

HEARING AID CENTRE

ACTON—22 Main St. South 853-2211
GEORGETOWN—Georgetown Optical Marketplace Plaza 877-3582

Having A Hearing Problem? Problems With Your Hearing Aid?

Mr. F. L. Burke will be in...
Georgetown—Friday, June 2—9 a.m. to 12 noon
Acton—Friday, June 2—1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Beltone HEARING AID SERVICE

URGENT!! URGENT!! URGENT!!

Acton Meals-On-Wheels NEEDS YOU!

Anyone who could spare one hour over lunchtime, 12 to 1 p.m., for one day a week or twice a month, etc.

Please come to the meeting
Wednesday, May 31 - 7 p.m.
at the
Acton Community Service Centre
YMCA Building
or call
Terry Grubbe 853-3310

To Volunteer or Learn More about this Worthwhile Community Service
Drivers and Non-Drivers Needed !!

SPRING INTO SUMMER SAVINGS

JUNE FOOD VALUES

Facella Royale 2 Roll Pkg. (Save 30¢) 89¢
Betty Crocker 18 oz. Pkg. (Save 16¢) 79¢
PAPER TOWELS SUPER MOIST CAKE MIXES

Quench 4 Pak Pouch (Save 20¢) 89¢
Kraft 16 oz. Bottle (Save 14¢) 69¢
FRUIT CRYSTALS BARBECUE SAUCE

Grade 'A' Medium FARM FRESH EGGS 83¢ doz.

Aunt Maria 28 oz. Tins (Save 38¢) 2/1.00
Pantry Shelf 2 lb. Jar (Save 40¢) \$1.59
TOMATOES PEANUT BUTTER

Pantry Shelf 28 oz. Tins (Save 24¢) 59¢
Indio 12 oz. Tin (Save 30¢) 99¢
CHOICE PEACHES CORNED BEEF

Flowerdale Pkg. of 100 (Save \$1.00) \$1.99
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Canada No. 1 SWEET & SOUR RIBS lb. \$1.89
Swift's Eversweet 1 lb. Pkg. SIDE BACON \$1.49
Shopsy 16 oz. Container POTATO SALAD or COLE SLAW 69¢

PRICES EFFECTIVE MAY 31, JUNE 1, 2, 3
WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT QUANTITIES

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