

The Acton Free Press

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Don McDonald, Publisher

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Two good suggestions

The picturesque bridge leading to Acton library spans Henderson's Creek (alias School Creek) and lends distinction to one of Acton's beauty spots but as Halton Hills Library Board heard last week it can present a hazard for the elderly and the unshod-footed during winter months.

Because the structure is made of wood library people cannot spread ice melting chemicals on the bridge or use the regular methods for keeping it clean. Ice and snow pack down on it and make it an obstacle sometimes to library access.

One trustee at last week's meeting suggested the board should investigate the possibility of installing a sidewalk from the Main St. side of the library to the doors to compensate for the condition of the bridge.

There are undoubtedly many who would prefer using a sidewalk instead of scaling the bridge. It's an excellent suggestion and library patrons would have their choice of two ways of getting to the library doors.

Trustee Norman Elliott also suggested the board should think of doing something now about the weeds and litter which choke up the creek in front of the library during the summer months. When

the water in the creek is high and flowing strong the tarnish on the landscape is not so noticeable. As soon as water levels get low all the rubbish and weeds appear and spoil what could easily be one of the community's idyllic locations.

It is doubly important to keep the area tidy and the creek bed clean because it is on a main highway where travellers receive first impressions of Acton. It is also the site of the historic plaque which commemorates the founding of Acton by the Adams brothers, saddleback preachers of the Methodist persuasion.

At one time Brendan Aherne of the now defunct Parks and Recreation Board of the former Town of Acton unveiled plans to construct a walkway beside the creek, starting near the music centre on Wallace St. and winding up at Fairy Lake.

The proposal was ahead of its time and exceeded Acton's financial limits but if the library board could start the ball rolling by keeping the creek clean in co-operation with the town of Halton Hills it could be the start of the ambitious project. It would certainly enhance that corner of the town and make the entrance to the library more attractive than ever.



View from the Crescent bridge

-Photo by Robin Inscow

Mall better than plaza

Halton Hills Planning Board heard the overwhelming majority of the estimated 300 people who attended last Wednesday's public meeting come out squarely for a plaza in Acton.

It may not be indicative of the feelings of the entire community but public sympathy was squarely in the developers' camp from those who cared enough to attend.

There's no doubt downtown businessmen in Acton were disappointed with the results of the straw vote taken at the meeting. There was much criticism of businessmen and sharp reaction to their suggestion that there was room for more business in the downtown.

Now the ball is in the planning board's court. They must decide whether public opinion takes precedence over planning done by the town staff and the official plan of the community which tries to keep business in one area instead of spreading it over town.

There's some doubt downtown business will be hurt by the presence of a plaza in the east end of Acton but there are other questions we should also be asking if we really have the best interests of the community at heart.

Will the downtown decay if development is allowed or encouraged in the east end?

Will it be an eyesore of neglected stores and im-

poverished businessmen and women?

Will a plaza of the type proposed add any more variety and competition to Acton business or merely move existing business to a new location?

Will it kill the ambitious plans the Business Improvement Association has for the downtown?

These are just a few questions citizens should ask before they throw their support 100 per cent behind any plaza development.

There's no doubt Acton needs more commercial establishments to capture some of the shopping dollars which go out of town, but it is not a problem peculiar to Acton. Georgetown people shop in Brampton and other nearby malls. Milton people shop in Oakville and Burlington. Guelph people shop in Kitchener, all complaining they can't get what they want in their own communities. It's an endless cycle where shopping is an excursion as well as a necessity.

Competition is the lifeblood of any shopping area and it makes sense to keep stores in as compact an area as the town can afford. Shopping plaza layouts bear this out.

If Acton must have commercial development in the east end then let a covered mall also be proposed, not just a plaza. Let's go whole hog, not by half-measure.

Shakespeare's Shylock set the tone

Recently I've been teaching that perennial favorite, The Merchant of Venice, by one Will Shakespeare. It's a light, romantic comedy, but through the pretty speeches and comic complications runs an iron and an irony that almost steals the play every time it is read or performed: the story of Shylock the money-lender and his insistence on his pound of flesh.

That word and that phrase have become part of your language. You may have heard someone say, "He's a regular Shylock," or, "He always wants his pound of flesh." They are synonyms of a merciless greed, hatred, and desire for revenge.

For those who have forgotten the plot, or haven't read or seen the play, I'll give a pocket synopsis.

A rich merchant is approached by his best friend, a young man who has squandered all his money, including a goodly sum the merchant has lent him. The young fellow wants his friend to lend him another sum, about \$35,000, so that he can get himself all duded up and marry a wealthy heiress, upon which he will return all the money he owes. For friendship's sake, the rich merchant says, "No problem. All my cash is tied up in ships at sea with rich cargoes, but my credit is excellent. Go borrow the money and I'll back your note." Or words to that effect. I

by
Bill
Smiley



am Will Smiley, not Will Shakespeare. So the young blade goes to a notorious money-lender, Shylock, who agrees to lend him the money for three months. Usually, he charges more interest than Household Finance, but this time he won't charge any. The plot thickens.

In a few sneering asides, we learn that Shylock hates the rich merchant. He has reasons. The merchant has spat upon him, spurned him, called him dog, and hurt him badly in the pocketbook by lending money interest-free.

Shylock can stand the epitting and the names, but he turns purple when he thinks someone is lending money with no interest when he could be copping 40 per cent.

He sees his chance. Sure, he'll lend the young spender the money, interest-free, provided the merchant will sign a bond: that if the money is not repaid by a certain date, Shylock may take a pound of flesh from any part of the merchant's body.

It's all a joke, of course. As Shylock points out, a pound of human flesh is not worth as much as a pound of veal, or even a pound of hamburger. (This was before inflation. I wouldn't bet on it nowadays.)

The rich merchant agrees, airily. After all, his ships will be in with their rich cargoes a whole month before the bond is due. And nobody would take a pound of flesh.

(Sigh!) We in the audience know that Shylock will take a pound of flesh from the heart area, and that the laws of the city will back him up, if the bond is signed in quadruplicate.)

Well, well. It is rumored on the stock exchange that the rich merchant's ships have all been lost at sea, and he is bankrupt!

Big trial scene. The law upholds Shylock's claim. Old Shy is whetting a big carving knife on his boot. The rich merchant stands, breast bared. It's as good as the old melodrama, with the heroine tied to the railway tracks by the villain, and the train fast approaching.

Smart young lawyer to the rescue. Shylock may take his pound of flesh, but not one drop of blood, not one ninth of an ounce more or less than pound, or his own life, and all his property, is forfeit. Try that one on the next pig you kill.

Now Shylock was stumped. (An old cricket term, chaps.) And that Will Shakespeare knew his law. He was continually involved in litigation, like many a playwright. A great (to me) line in one of his plays goes, "Let's hang all the lawyers."

Anyway. The whole thing got me thinking of usury. This was once an honest term meaning interest on money loaned. It has since come to mean charging excessive interest on money loaned. A dirty business.

In Elizabethan England, usury was a crime, and heavily punished. Right up to the death penalty, depending on whom you knew, in the right circles.

And I began thinking about usury, in its pejorative (that means name-calling) sense, in our society today. Is it shameful to be a usurer? Is usury something to be hidden under the rug? Are there any penalties for usury? Answer: no.

Our modern usurers are not even ashamed of what they do. They advertise it in all the media.

They run all the way from our banks, among our most respected institutions, down to our finance companies, so called among our less respected institutions, all the way to the hood in Montreal who will lend you money at 100 per cent interest, and break your knees with a baseball bat if you don't pay up.

Try borrowing \$20,000 from Ann Murray, who touts for a Canadian bank, with no interest. Try borrowing from a "finance company" without pledging your grandmother's bones for fertilizer in case you can't meet the deadline.

We are surrounded by usurers. Maybe Shakespeare was right. Line up all the usurers in Canada, shoot them quietly, and burn some at the stake. I'd enjoy that.

Body Politic decision disturbing - MPP

It is with the deepest sense of regret I feel compelled to write this letter. I am extremely disturbed by the decision handed down by Judge Sydney Harris, acquitting the Pink Triangle Press in

The Body Politic trial. Claire Hoy, in his column appearing in The Toronto Sun, Thursday, February 15, 1979, sums it up best by quoting a statement made by Edmund Burke, January 9, 1795—"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." This quote inspired me to make my stand known.

Quoting again from Mr. Hoy's column—"Yet the final paragraph of the article, referring to the men who had experienced various forms of sexual activity with children—one aged seven—concludes that these men are "leaders in boys' work, community workers who deserve our praise, our admiration and our support."

The Pink Triangle Press, the publishers of this article, have stated that they intend to reprint it, as well as articles of a similar nature. Hopefully there are enough decent people who will express their strong opposition to this disgusting and sickening material! It is a sick society that condones, or even appears to condone, the exploitation of its children.

For the good of our society, now is the time to make your views known and to publicly make your stand.

Very sincerely,
Jack Johnson, M.P.P.,
Wellington-Dufferin-Peel

Back issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, February 28, 1969
Councillors from Acton, Georgetown and Esqueving township attacked the "unknowns" of regional government at the first meeting of its kind in Esqueving hall Wednesday afternoon. Acton's Mayor Les Dudy said he felt there were other areas in Ontario where administration had not been nearly as progressive and efficient as in Halton. He felt the spreading out of industrial representation was all that would be required of regional government. He said Acton opposes a Halton-Peel arrangement. Another meeting is planned. Council will ask M.P. Rud Whiting for assistance in preparing a brief asking for the retaining of Acton's CNR station.

The spirit of Nassagaweya and vicinity was evident when dozens of men converged on the Sixth Line home of Mr. and Mrs. Bonus and family to start reconstructing their home which was damaged by fire.

Mrs. George Fryer was again elected president of the Golden Age Club.

John Shadbolt was elected President of the Chamber of Commerce. Other executive members are Don Lindsay, Fred Gordon, Orval Chapman, Chris Schuts, John Coniglio, Carl Watzock, Don Timmings, Earl Jollymore.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, February 19, 1959

Acton Pentecostal church was host for the first time for the World Day of Prayer service. About 80 attended. The wife of the pastor, Mrs. Kenneth Reid, was speaker. Water superintendent J. Lambert has his hands full thawing out water services these days.

A special committee to investigate the possibility of artificial ice in Acton was authorized to apply for council's approval of a bylaw to set up a Community Centre Board. This action followed approval of a campaign to raise \$80,000, during a public meeting in the Y Monday. Bert Wood was chairman. Ted Tyler Sr. and Ted Tyler Jr. showed sketches for renovations.

Ross Shortill is president of the Junior Farmers, Marvyn Hunter vice-president, Ian Norrish secretary-treasurer.

Close to 1,000 people donned winter togery to brave the cold of Acton arena to attend Booster Night sponsored by the Legion Minor Sports committee. Weston Skating Club presented a fine show.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, February 21, 1929

The announcement is being made this week of the opening of a new Ford agency and service station in Acton for this town and the district including Georgetown, Rockwood and Norval. The new garage is being opened by W. A. Norton of Toronto.

After operating for about nine years, the Acton Co-operative store decided last week to close its store here. The store was operated by Messrs. Beardmore and Co. to give their employees and patrons the benefit of co-operative buying in large quantities. The entire contents of the store have been purchased by J. W. Jones of the Red and White store.

Nassagaweya lost another of its pioneers in the person of Amaziiah Kingsbury. He had an attack of the flu which was followed by pneumonia.

Halton County Jail is presently overcrowded with prisoners, there being 22 confined there.

A Halton landmark, the Lindsay hotel property at Hornby, was destroyed by fire.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, February 27, 1879

A Big Smoke! And A Little Flame. - On Saturday evening the people of Acton were suddenly startled by the cry of "Fire! Fire!" which was immediately followed by the fire bell ringing its loud alarm, that effectually bringing the majority of the inhabitants of the village to the streets. All immediately proceeded to E. Nicklin's residence, and for some time the position of the fire could not be placed. It was impossible to get upstairs and at last a ladder was procured and John Warden thus made his way into the bedroom where it was found the fire originated. The fire itself caused little damage but the water which was thrown around in large quantities ruined carpets and furniture while considerable damage was by the hasty removal and rough handling to which the furniture was subjected. The whole loss will amount to about \$200; the building was insured in the Waterloo Mutual for \$1,000.

John Warden severely cut his hand on a piece of window glass. The insurance company has given him \$10 for his services. Acton has at present its full complement of men "out of work." If some of them would go out sawing wood it would be more creditable than their present mode of existence.

Remember the Grand Organ recital at Rome's Organ Factory, Rockwood, tonight.

From the Fourth Estate

Shop and compare plazas

by Eric Elstone

There is one point of agreement between shopping plaza developer Jerry Sprackman and Acton's downtown merchants. Both sides welcome competition. At least they said they did during last week's public meeting in the high school.

The downtown merchants, however, want the competition on better terms than offered by plaza developer Jerry Sprackman. They would rather have the food store and parking downtown, rather than off on the eastern edge of town where it may well draw away enough core dollars to sink some of the downtown into red ink.

Sprackman, on the other hand, has competition the way he wants it. That's little competition at all.

There is little doubt we Acton shoppers are going to get another food store with parking. Sprackman's studies convince

him there is enough dollars in town to go ahead with the project.

No matter how attractive Sprackman's proposal is, and that Zehrs store looks good, we should not sell ourselves short.

Apply to the proposed plaza all the criteria we bring to bear on our everyday shopping. Does the proposal fill all our needs?

Sprackman offers a quick and easy solution to many of our shopping woes. A big new store with plenty of parking plus the chance of more stores later. So what? Do you buy the first car you see because it has four wheels, a chassis and seats. Of course not. You have a clear idea of what you want.

Trouble is we don't often shop for a plaza. But because we are not used to examining an item the size of a shopping centre does not mean we do not owe it to

ourselves to do so. That building is going to be here for a long time and if it is a goof, you can't trade in the lemon.

Like the sophisticated consumers we are, let's get some consumer information. Shop and compare.

Where? For a start local councillors can act and see what other plaza ideas there are for Acton. It only suits Sprackman to build on the edge of town because he has an option to buy the land. That option is very likely running out soon.

That land is already zoned rural. Although one report directs Acton's growth to the east, there had better be a good reason to urbanize the countryside.

In other words, rather than accept what is given, determine exactly where we want it and what we want. Because other communities take second best is no measure for Acton to follow.