

The Acton Free Press

Founded in 1875

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Disston decision blow to Acton's economy

Rumors of a permanent plant shutdown at Acton's Disston Canada Inc. plant, denied at the first part of June, have proven correct. Over 125 employees of the plant will be out of work on September 29, with eight weeks notice.

Employees were notified by registered mail last week that the company would be closing down its Acton operations September 31. Two days later employees leave. According to company sources some employees may have the option of staying with the company and moving to its new location in Montreal.

Closing of the plant is a severe blow to Acton's industrial economy. The company has been a steady employer since it built a new plant in Acton back in 1957 and operated three divisions—Disston which produced saws, knives, trowels, steel rules; Thermoid which produced brake linings, clutch facings, insulated tapes; and the refractory division which produced high heat insulated brick for steel makers and foundries.

The company moved here from Toronto where it had been located since 1904, to get spacious, modern facilities on a major trucking line. It had markets for its products all over the world.

Rumors of a proposed closing circulated when employees were informed R. Hoe and Co., one of the oldest saw manufacturers in the United States, had made a bid to purchase part of Disston Canada's production facilities for woodworking tools. This has since been verified. Disston public relations officer G. E. Janson said then it was not known whether the purchase would affect the Acton plant or its employees. Employees, however, surmised it would mean closing lines and work going to American plants.

Hopefully the Hoe company will rehire Acton workers and continue production at the plant.

Disston recently (Feb. 1979) signed a two year contract with Local 8603 of the United Steel Workers of America, which was described as a "break-through" by union representatives.

The contract gave employees a 55 cent per hour raise in the first year, 35 cents the second year and cost of living allowance as well as other improved benefits. The agreement was signed after a three week strike, the third in the company's 22 years in Acton. Lowest wages at the plant were \$6.03 per hour while highest were \$7.03.

The shutdown takes over a million and quarter dollars out of circulation from wages which originated in the Acton plant. It is a severe blow to the local economy.

Plans for the plant were not revealed at this writing but it is obvious Halton's industrial commissioner William A. Marshall should be made fully aware of the impact of the closing on the economy of both Acton and Halton Hills. Hopefully, at this time of increasing industrial development and strength the Hoe company may find the Acton facilities desirable and the location here suited for manufacturing.

Acton is close to the major Canadian markets and is an ideal location for some other company interested in locating new major markets and appreciative of small town advantages.

The irony of the move to Montreal can't be dismissed. The Province of Quebec is experiencing a drain of many of its large companies, many of them moving to Ontario. In Acton's case the move is counter-clockwise.

Cyclists to be "drivers"

Bicyclists should be reminded they will have new responsibilities under the Highway Traffic Act.

The tragic death last week of a cyclist in Nassagaweya should be ample reminder that bicyclists are to have new responsibilities under the Highway Traffic Act. Introduced recently by the Hon. Jim Snow, Minister of Transportation and Communications, the Act proposes to more clearly define a "driver."

It officially makes a bicycle a "vehicle" and its operator a "driver."

It is hoped the amending legislation will impress upon cyclists they must comply with regulations and rules set down under The Highway Act the same as the driver of any other vehicle.

Cyclists, especially children have been giving motorists

around Acton and district some tense moments as they dart out of stop streets without stopping, ride two and three abreast on roads ignoring traffic both ways, failing to give signals and committing other traffic infractions.

Clearly when accidents happen it is not only cyclists who are to blame. Motorists also have to be wary when they observe bicycles on the road and give them ample room to navigate. But cyclists should always remember it is better to be a live cyclist than an injured or dead one. It is foolish to argue with a vehicle which may be 2,500 pounds heavier. Better to observe safety precautions and stay alive.

Children particularly should be reminded of the dangers of the road on bicycles and urged to observe all the precautions and traffic laws.



Hot weather of the past week brought droves of people to the cool, refreshing waters of Fairy Lake. Kim and Tracey Arnold along with Sandi, Susan, Jane and Cheryl De-rouese found one way to beat the heat.

Fond memories of a weekly editor

A couple of big anniversaries are coming up for weekly newspapers, or community newspapers, as they are called these days.

In July, the Canadian Community Newspapers Association is celebrating its diamond jubilee at a convention in Toronto. In Warton, Ontario, the Echo is celebrating its 100th birthday this July. I'd like to take in both, as a member of the former for 11 years and editor of the latter for the same period.

Some of the happiest years of my life, as far as work goes, were spent in the weekly newspaper business. And as work goes, it went a long way—about 60 hours a week.

It requires a certain type of personality and outlook to be a happy weekly editor. It did when I was one. It's a lot different now, with young, hard-hosed editors, fresh out of journalism school, imitating the techniques of the dailies.

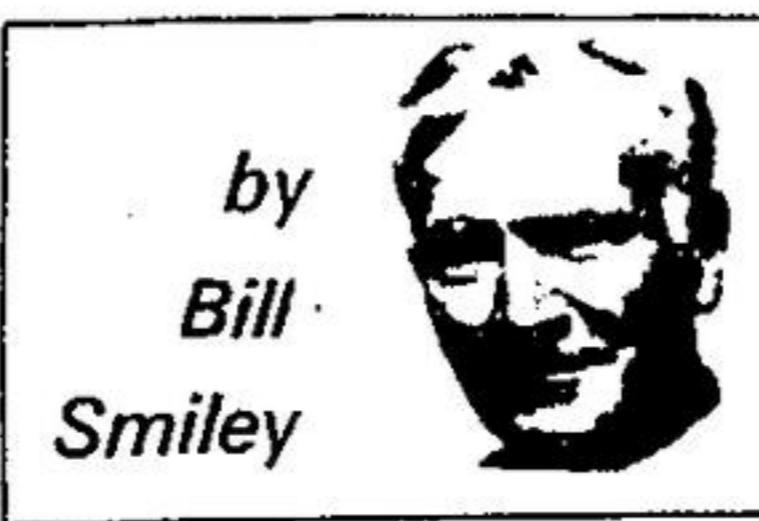
First of all, you had to have a complete lack of material desires. You could make a living, but you never got rich, or even well to do.

Next, you had to keep your back shop happy, the printing staff. And anyone who has ever tried to keep a printing staff happy knows that it's about as easy as attending a picnic of rattlesnakes without being bitten.

Then, of course, you had to tread the thin line between being fearless, independent and outspoken, and selling enough advertising to keep body and soul together. The guy who attacked town council for some nefarious bylaw, and the guy who went out and tried to sell ads to the six merchants on the town council were the same guy, very often.

There were the inevitable typographical errors, to harry the obfuscated editor. In a wedding write-up, the bride very often came out as the "bridge". In funeral accounts, the pallbearers were apt to be described as "six old fiends" who carried the coffin to its final rest.

In a small town, there are currents of jealousy and antagonism and family feuds that run deep and strong.



by Bill Smiley

Praise a local politician for making a good move, and his third cousin from the other side of the family would call you up and tell you, with vivid detail, what a snake-in-the-grass your first man was.

Venture to criticize, however gently, an athlete or a public figure, and you'd have your ears scorched by 84 close relatives who normally despised the guy, but rallied to their roots when an aspersion was cast on the clan.

Hell hath no fury like a Women's Institute whose account of its meeting, including everything from who said Grace to what they ate, was cut by the blue pencil.

And then, of course, there were the drunks who would call you up at 3 a.m. to ask you to settle an argument about who scored the final goal in the 1934 Stanley Cup playoff. And the kooks who would call you up and try to plant a libellous rumour, or demand that you come out to the farm and take a picture of their home-made threshing machine.

There was always some country correspondent (furious because her "news", consisting of who visited whom on Sunday afternoon, was crowded out by a rush of late advertising. "Why don't you leave out some ads?")

There was no lack of variety in the weekly business, when you were reporter, editor, advertising manager, proof reader, and general bunboy for the tyrants in the back shop.

I distinctly remember a St. Patrick's Day night, when there was an unexpected heavy fall of snow. An elderly gentleman

of Irish descent had been celebrating the day in the pub. When he hadn't arrived home by ten o'clock, his housekeeper called for help. The local pubs were alerted, and the hockey rink, where there was a game in progress. Most of the male population, at least half of the half-lit, stormed off to search for the missing man. We found him, covered in snow, about a quarter-mile from his house. Back to the rink and the pubs.

I remember shouting at deaf old ladies who were celebrating their ninetieth birthdays, and getting some of the most surprising answers.

"How long has your husband been dead?"

"Nah, he never was much good in bed."

"To what do you attribute your long life?"

"Yas, I was always a good wife." And so on.

To be a successful editor, though not necessarily a good one, you had to continually straddle fences. This becomes a bit of a chafe after a while.

You had to be able to write on demand. I remember one week when there was absolutely nothing to fill a two-column, four inch space on the front page. In about twenty minutes, I knocked out eight column inches of sparkling prose in which the reader had to read to the end to discover that nothing worth reporting had happened that week.

It sounds as though I'm knocking the game. Not so. These are fond memories. And there were rewards, most of them intangible. It was kind of nice to be introduced to strangers as "our" editor. It gave satisfaction when a subscriber from away down in the States dropped in on his way to the summer cottage and said he, "Sure liked that piece about the deer hunt."

And there was a certain quiet pride in one's status. My daughter, aged eight, produced the fitting requiem when I left newspaper work and went into teaching.

"But Daddy," she observed, "that means you're not The Editor any more." I sadly agreed.

Back issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Wednesday, July 23, 1969.

Acton Jehovah Witnesses are busy these days building their new Kingdom Hall on 25 Highway. The new building is being constructed alongside the old Lorne school.

The Free Press has received word that the former Morris Pharmacy on Mill St. has been purchased by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. The building was owned by Mrs. Earl Cooper and has been idle since last year, when Mr. Morris decided to dispose of his business.

Trudy Morris, Acton's first Ontario Scholar, has won four more awards at Queen's. She has just completed her first year there.

Mrs. Laura Dittrich is helping William Erskine complete the assessing.

All Actonians who competed in the Music League Festival in Toronto place high, with accordionist Joe Petric receiving an outstanding eight awards. The others were Sheila Cheyne, Norman Paulsen, Susan Schupp, Jim Ellis, Colleen De Bruyn, Maria Grefeneder, Bonnie and Sharon Gillespie.

What's the future for the town's water tank? The 40-year-old tank is no longer heeded. It used to store water from the south spring. Council will be discussing the problem.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, July 16, 1959.

When Queen Elizabeth saw Guelph for the first time last Thursday afternoon, there were many from Acton there, joining the thousands of cheering spectators.

Away at Guide Camp are Janet Adams, Janet Rogivaldson, Sandra Hargrave, Kathryn Higgins, Vicky Newton and Jill Hurst.

A wide-spread gas war hit Acton Tuesday. Prices went as low as 31.9 cents a gallon.

The hopes of Gregor Mance went up in smoke when his small tannery was destroyed by fire. An expert tanner, he comes from Yugoslavia.

Ivan Harris dealt himself a perfect cribbage hand at the Legion.

While the Junior Pipe Band and Acton L.O.L. flute band paraded at Mimico to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, for the first time in 81 years C.K. Browne stayed home. Lodge members called on him before they left. Illness forced him to stay home at the age of 89.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, July 18, 1929.

Acton L.O.L. participated in the Orange Walk and celebration at Georgetown. They paraded to the Electric Railway station headed by their flute and drum band.

Miss Margaret Grindell and Miss Mary Stewart passed their Normal School examinations.

Two gypsies were fined \$2 and costs at Guelph for having mesmerized a bread truck driver. \$24 was taken in the film-film.

Master Melvin Bridgeman of R.R. 2, Rockwood has created something of a record for himself, having started to a rural school at the age of six and now having passed the first year of Guelph Collegiate at the age of 12. Much credit is due to his teacher Miss Jessie Lindsay of Bloomsbury school who put him through his Third Book, Fourth Book and Entrance work, all inside a period of two years.

The tennis courts and bowling greens of Acton Athletic Society are busy places these evenings.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, July 17, 1879.

Could not Canadian newsdealers shut down on the sale of low illustrated American weeklies, which tend to demoralize our youth?

Parcel post rates have been reduced to six cents for four ounces and under, and six cents for every additional four ounces.

Milton papers make considerable boasting about their new sidewalks. No wonder. Their old ones were a disgrace.

A reckless drunkard at Shakopee, Minn., crushed a wine glass between his teeth and swallowed it. He soon died in dreadful agony.

Knox church choir, Dndas, has been dissolved. The elders "thought the lads and lassies should sit down in front of the minister and whaur the elders could watch them."

The organ which has been used in the Methodist church for two or three years has been exchanged for a new one.

The Toronto Telegram advocates short sermons during this hot, sweltering weather. We second the motion.

Nobody ever realizes how much time is wasted in this world until he comes upon a group of men working on their statute labor

From the Editor's Note Book

By Hartley Coles

The catch basin in front of the Coles home has become a cause celebre, whatever that means, and the numbers pausing to inspect it has also aroused considerable public opinion. Problem is whether it is favorable or otherwise.

For instance one fine chap who inspected the basin observed, "Perhaps we could 'pool' our information and more could realize the benefits of having a shell hole in their front lawn." Then he grinned and pedalled his bicycle down the Drive.

A letter arrived from a gentleman named Don something or other which noted I was now in the "pool" business. It suggested that if I didn't want my arm busted or a leg unfastened I better get out quick. The writer said his "pool" tickets sold for \$1 each and The Family would not appreciate being undercut by a relative

newcomer.

Perhaps the most persistent piece arrived unannounced at my door this Tuesday morning slipped there with picture enclosed for future considerations. It read:

Dear Sir:

Acton's newest swimming facility located on Elizabeth Drive... better known by the local name of the Cole Hole is creating an industry... at least for the town and region.

A new sign has been posted by the town works dept. Region engineers will design and construct protective fencing and paving. Tenders will be called soon and as long as they reach budget they will be completed or temporary fencing and paving will be installed. Recreation is arranging a swimming program for ad-

vanced and beginners.

The parking authority is working on a new parking lot. Council will be announcing a new charge system for admittance. Attendants will have to be hired.

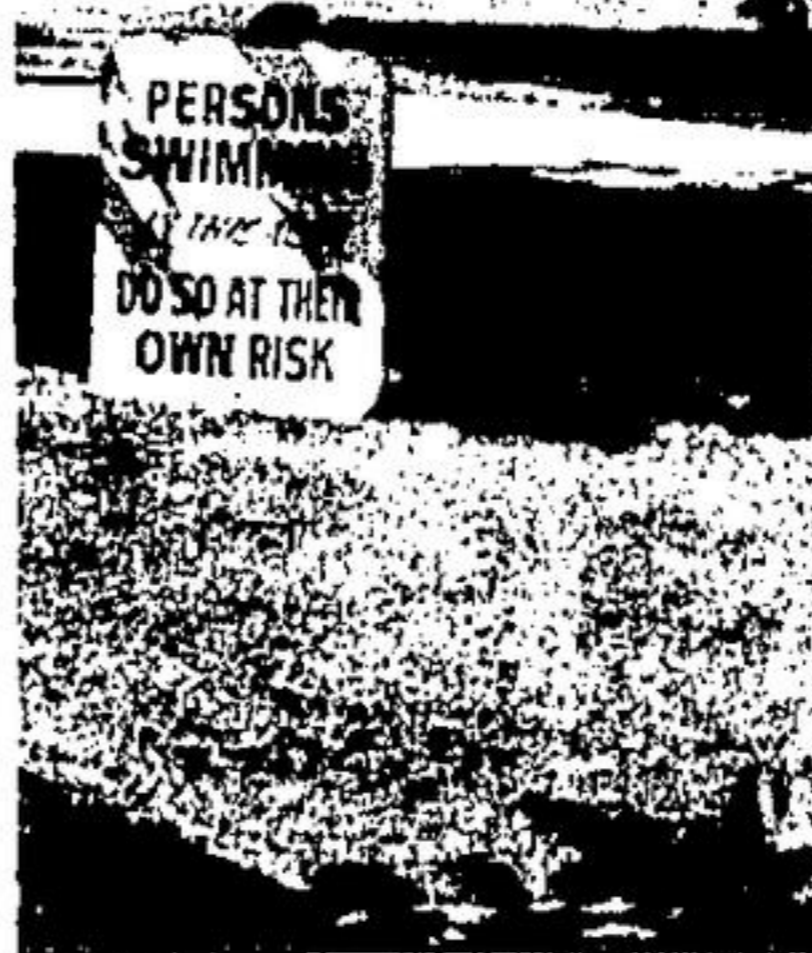
Council will apply for a grant from Region or Province for diving and flood-lighting equipment. The Conservation Authority want to take over the project and flood the entire neighbourhood. Maintenance is open to tender.

The pool will be officially opened by the first person to accidentally fall in or the first from regional council to appear on the scene.

The pool will remain open as long as there is flooding. Official name suggested is the Ed. E. Torial Pool.

Signed,

Chip off the Old Block.



A sign has already appeared on Elizabeth Drive's newest swimming hole.