

# The Acton Free Press

Founded in 1875

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Don McDonald, Publisher

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## Once a week enough

Although the inconvenience of once a week garbage collection may irk residents, there is no doubt council's decision to continue it instead of going back to two collections a week is practical.

The facts as gathered by town engineer Bob Austin show that costs for a second day of pick-up exceed the cost of the first day of pick-up as much as 52-83 per cent. Savings realized by one pick-up day are significant.

Mr. Austin also points out equipment and labor costs remain constant the second day although households place less garbage out for collection.

It is not difficult to follow his reasoning over complaints from some residents about a return to the two day system. He notes the unpleasantness of stinking garbage rotting in hot summer temperatures would not be altered by twice a week pick-up, nor will it alter the attraction for animals. It is up to the householders' discretion where refuse is stored because it must be done every day. He says it is generally a matter of good house-keeping and adhering to the by-law which governs hours when refuse may be placed at the street line.

There's no doubt that two pick-ups a week were more convenient for home owners. Accepting the one pick-up will take time but it is the most economical way of collecting garbage without running up more expense to show on tax bills. And it is bound to get more expensive with rising fuel costs and wage increases, without considering extra costs involved when the Georgetown landfill site closes this fall and garbage must be trucked to the Oakville dump.

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## A worthy campaign

Few people would argue that Canadians must first look after their own before they extend aid to people from other countries but surely the case for Vietnamese refugees, the "boat people", is an emergency situation and the people of this town and Canadians in general would be remiss if we ignored their plight.

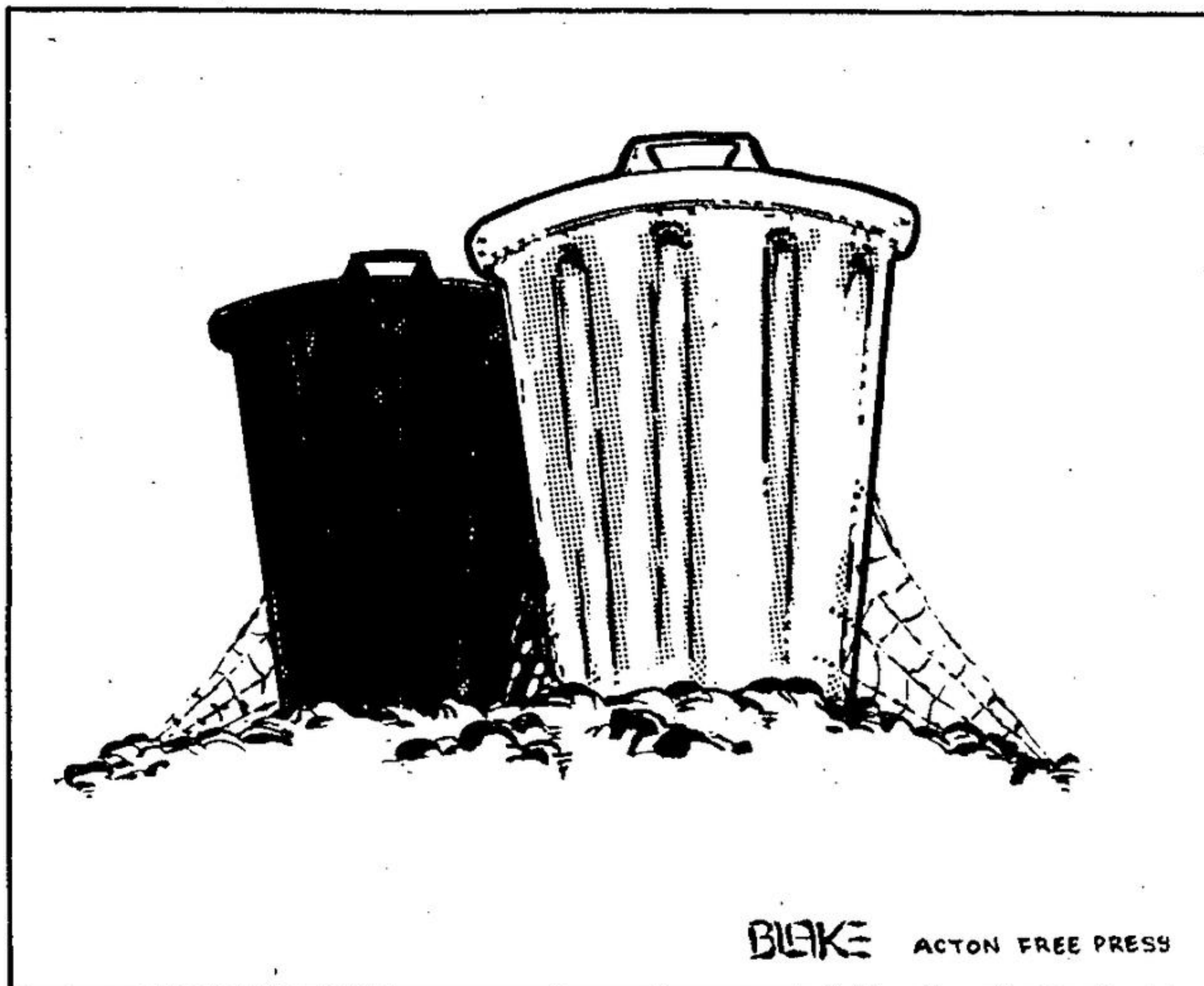
New Brampton-Georgetown MP John McDermid said it correctly when he noted Canada has its poor but our poor are infinitely better off than those floating out in the ocean in a leaky barge. They are human beings who need help. God help us if we don't extend aid.

Mr. McDermid pointed out that these refugees have a tradition of hard work. They don't like to take hand-outs and will work hard to

support themselves very quickly. They'll do anything to be self-supporting, he notes, although many of them are professional people, doctors, lawyers, etc.

There are arguments that the boat people will take jobs away from Canadians but the Government believes they will do jobs that Canadians no longer are willing to do.

The people of Acton and district are already involved in sponsoring families of refugees and this week the churches in town got together to launch another drive to assist refugee families in distress. The programs needs support and encouragement from all who recognize that except for an accident of geography these fellow humans in distress could be us.



## Dominion Hotel over century old

Last Sunday morning Fire Chief Mick Holmes found himself directing the fire-fighting at the Dominion Hotel once owned by his father and grandfather. The site has been used for over a century as an Acton hostelry. Now it is completely destroyed.

The original site of the Dominion was used as a hotel and tavern before the present hotel was built. Called the Anderson House, the birthplace of Oliver Anderson, the log building encompassing the first public house was far from impressive.

Part of the present hotel was built by Robert Agnew, a publican who emigrated from Carlisle, Scotland and came to Canada to "make his fortune."

After operating a boarding house in Smiths Falls, Robert Agnew and his wife came to Acton around 1870 and leased the Old California House which stood near the Main Street Creek.

However, feeling the need for something closer to "the centre of town", Robert Agnew purchased the Anderson House property, tore down the log building and built the first wing of the Dominion, well set back from Main Street.

All the above information comes from Acton's Early Days, by H.P. Moore and G. Arlof Dills.

An engraving of the Dominion Hotel appeared in Walker and Milles' County Atlas in 1877.

The hotel was largely patronized by travellers, mill workers and men who teamed lumber in those early days. Mrs. Agnew was housekeeper and was fondly called "Mom" by her guests, all of whom praised her wholesome food and comfortable beds.

Rivalry between the four hotels in town was acute especially when it came to the menus for the many banquets and dinners held for councils, lodges, and school boards. According to Acton's Early Days, the Dominion always "took the cake."

One story coming out of these banquets was a special dinner in late December, 1878, given by the Council. Apparently, the partakers ate heartily and imbibed thoroughly, Bob Agnew having the reputation as "genial host". After dinner the usually dignified councillors began to get boisterous and plaster each others hair with butter.

It wasn't ordinary run-of-the-mill butter, H.P. Moore tells us, but the finest gilded butter, 15 cents a pound—the best in Nassagaweya. Mrs. Agnew would have no other.

In the 1870's the Scott Act swept Halton and other counties and, according to Acton's Early Days, bars and cellars all over town were locked and down came the popular little signs that proclaimed "Licensed to sell spirituous and malt liquors."

Bob Agnew was "naturally wrathful"—"the people had no business robbing him of his vested rights" (Acton's Early Days, page 54). He retaliated by padlocking his pump, shed gates and hotel doors. But he was too kind-hearted and could only lock out his guests for 24 hours. After that, he was back in business without selling "the grog".

For many years Bob Agnew's father, "Daddy Agnew" was a familiar figure at the hotel. He and his little dog, always trotting at his heels, were a frequent sight.

The Dominion hotel was cartooned by the pen of J.W. Bengough, well-known



A picture of the hotel likely taken in the 1920s or '30s.

cartoonist of the day. A drawing of Free Press editor H.P. Moore, an ardent temperance worker, quaffing a schooner of beer at the Dominion with Bob Agnew in the background, caused quite a stir. The drawing was auctioned off at the hotel the night it was drawn—Bengough was a guest—and brought the grand sum \$8.67, being sold to Bob Agnew who pinned it over his bar.

After the Agnews retired, the hotel and property was purchased by Albert Lehman of Kitchener. A different kind of landlord, business priorities swung from travellers care to tavern profits. It was Lehman who enlarged and improved the property, veneering it with brick and adding a third floor in 1907.

Whereas Bob Agnew was never in trouble with the law concerning the rules for serving liquor, Albert Lehman was often summoned to court and paid heavy fines for having "booze" on his premises.

At one time, just after Lehman received his weeks shipment of beer, he was pounced on by local constabulary, fined \$600 and costs while his beer was ordered destroyed. The avenging angel officers had "the time of their lives" according to Acton's Early Days, bashing in five and ten gallon kegs of beer all over Willow Street at the Town Hall. The viewing

crowd were heard to gasp. "Why this awful waste?"

In all, Lehman paid the court \$1,260 in fines before he sold the business to Charles A. Decker of Oakville. Business continued successfully until prohibition on September 16, 1916.

The hotel was then leased by the Ryder & Mowat Glove Company with W.A. Storey as manager.

Glove making replaced beer quaffing until 1919 and the premises were then rented into small apartments. John Mellon managed this boarding house arrangement.

Once booze became legal again, the building, then owned by Harry Holmes, became once again a hotel for travellers under the supervision of his sons Harry Jr. and Charles.

At the time of publication of Acton's Early Days in 1939 it was still in the hands of these gentlemen catering to travellers, a beverage room replacing the once lucrative but illegal barroom.

There have been other publicans in charge since including Jack Royston, well known in Acton sports circles for his activity in baseball and hockey. Lou Wasowicz was another popular owner of the hotel.

The present owner in Cosimo Mercuri.



From the Halton County Atlas, 1877.

DOMINION HOUSE, R. AGNEW, PROP. ACTON WEST, ONT.

## Editorial notes . . .

Whether from urgings in these columns or design, town workmen have cut the weeds and cleaned up the creek bed in front of Acton public library. It has made a big improvement in one of Acton's beauty spots and the town efforts to keep it so are appreciated.

The decision by eight Acton churches to get actively involved in aid to Vietnamese refugees in a co-operative effort could signal a new era in Acton. In the past the churches have each gone their own way in most social matters perhaps because they lacked the resources to commit themselves to further action in the community. There are many areas in which the churches could actively co-operate and do much to make this community a better place to live. Other agencies may show interest but the churches have the moral strength to do many things, especially in youth work, that others find baffling.

Esquering Historical Society's decision to catalogue Halton Hills historical buildings when council refused to go along with the idea of a committee appointed to do same is commendable. Apparently councillors thought it would render them obliged to get in controversies such as that over the old Acton town hall. Members of the historical society pointed out it was not so but their request for a committee was turned down. Now they are doing it on their own initiative. Results should help to preserve our architectural heritage.

Letters to this newspaper are always welcome for publication but they must be signed. The editor received letters from someone over the dispute at Superior Glove signed simply "Anti-Union." It cannot be published unless the writer also signs their real name, although the pseudonym can be used for publication on request. Another letter arrived Monday with advice for those who are sponsoring the boat people with a typed signature, "KKK", obviously assuming we would think it was the Ku Klux Klan. It may be merely a prank. In any event if writers do not have the courage to sign their names then certainly we do not have the inclination to publish the letter.

It would be interesting to know why bathroom tissue and household paper towel prices are lower in the United States when they are often produced by multi-nationals with plants in both the U.S. and Canada. According to research done by NDP MPP Mel Swart of Welland-Thorold, supermarket prices for tissues and towels in the Niagara Falls-Lewiston area of the U.S. were 40 cents lower for a four roll package than in St. Catharines supermarkets. This MPP says all towels manufactured here come from our Canadian forests, therefore the dollar difference between the two countries should have no effect. Anyone know why there's such a price differential?

## Back issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Acton Free Press of Wednesday, August 20, 1969. It was billed as a dialogue on municipal government reform with discussions on the new Assessment Act, but the emphasis at last Thursday's confrontation between four Ontario cabinet ministers and 200 municipal representatives from Halton, Peel, Wellington, and Dufferin counties was on regional government proposals. Most of it was a rehash of previous meetings with little information, but it was obvious the deadline for regional government in the Peel-Halton area was substantially slowed down by the events of the past few months. Acton firefighters were called to the farm of Ben Tuck, R.H. 1 Campbellville last Thursday afternoon to extinguish a fire in a field of stubble.

The most successful Acton playground to date wound up Friday morning with a sing song and goodbyes, but it was really an anti-climax to Wednesday night's parade and program which for the first time in its six year history broke the rain jinx.

## 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Acton Free Press of Thursday, August 20, 1959. G.A. Dills, president of Dills Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., announced this week that this firm has purchased the Acton plant of the Baxter Laboratories of Canada, located on Willow St.

Progress at the new Robert Little public school addition will be marked Monday, August 24, at 11:30 a.m. when the cornerstone will be fitted into place. The 12-room addition blossoms daily with contractors attempting to meet the September deadline.

On Tuesday, a former resident of Acton, Mrs. Jennie B. Matthews observed her 98th birthday. The nonagenarian lives with her daughter Mrs. J. McMurchie in Toronto. Kenneth Hodgson of South River began duties as Class B linesman with the Acton Hydro Commission on Monday following the resignation of Ed Evans.

## 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, August 22, 1929. Activity in the construction of the new arena in Acton commenced in earnest this week and has been making good headway. Permission was given last week for the removal of the old drill hall to a new site in the park.

At a special meeting of the School Board at 12:45 p.m., Tuesday noon, Trustees Mrs. Havill, E. Beswick, E.W. Masters and G.R. Agnew were present and chairman George Hall presided. The meeting was called to consider applications for the vacancy caused by the withdrawal of Miss Hurst from the Continuation School staff. Some 12 or 15 applicants were received. Salaries re-estimated ranged from \$1000 to \$2000. Miss M.E. Raynard was engaged for the next school year at an annual salary of \$1450 as assistant in the Continuation School.

## 100 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Acton Free Press of Thursday, August 21, 1879. A private letter from Rev. R. Hobbs from England states that he expected to sail yesterday and will be home by the first of September. He says it has been very wet and cold all summer and that the farmers in the vicinity where he has been have had hard work to get in the crops.

Our attention has been directed to the careless manner in which the bell of the Congregational church is sometimes rung. We presume the person who rings it has not yet had the experience necessary to ring it properly. As it is, it sounds more like a fire alarm than a call to religious service. Were it rung as it should be, it would be a welcome and pleasant invitation to its hearers to prepare for divine worship.

On Friday afternoon, Mr. Daniel Mullen, a laborer in the employ of McIntosh and Wanless contractors for excavating for the Water Works piping in Guelph was buried as high as his waist by a cave-in of the earth near Huskisson Street railway crossing. The injuries received have since caused his death.

## Thanks

Dear Editor: Thank you for the excellent coverage which you gave Halton Women's Place on Aug. 1, concerning the Regional Health and Social Service Committee's recommendation that the hostel should receive a per diem of \$15.

As the Board has stated before your accurate and supportive reporting is essential to the Corporation in its pursuit of the goal of establishing a Halton Women's Place.

Yours sincerely  
Ann Burlison  
Burlington, Ont.