

# The Acton Free Press

Founded in 1875

Don McDonald, Publisher

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Reporter/Photographer: Eric Elstone  
Sports/Women's: Diana Waltmann  
Rockwood News: Jennifer Barr  
Contributor: Helen Murray  
Darkroom: Ken Bustin

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TELEPHONE (519) 853-2010

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## Au revoir

This is my last editorial as editor of The Acton Free Press. Next week new editor Gord(on) Murray will take over the reins of this community newspaper and this person will be full time editor with The Georgetown Independent, a sister newspaper in the Inland Publishing Co. Limited chain.

Gord has been sports editor of The Independent for the past year and a half. Prior to that he served a rigorous apprenticeship as a reporter with the Independent covering all facets of the job which community journalism entails.

Hard working, conscientious and interested in all areas of the community, my instincts tell me he will bring much energy into his new position. I've known him for five years as his editor. I have every confidence in his ability to produce a first class newspaper. He's a person with strong views but one who also listens to all sides of a story and writes objectively.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people I have been associated with over the past year, especially publisher Don McDonald, news editor Helen Murray, senior reporter Eric Elstone and sports editor Robin Insko for their encouragement and help over the past year. Also the staff of the composing room and press room for their skills. There have been changes and the staff has been able to adapt to them and to me and meet the challenges head on.

I wish I could be around to help shape the style and content of Acton's community newspaper in years to come. Publisher McDonald has kindly told me he will keep a place for me in the news office to help whenever they feel it might be needed.

This community has always had a first class newspaper, often

described as the "dandy" of the business for its excellent typography both under the late H.P. Moore, late G.A. Dills and sons David and Jim and later Kay Dills. Inland Publishing Co. Limited has continued that tradition and added new wrinkles of its own to keep the Free Press in the forefront of the newspaper business. The newspaper is well equipped to meet the challenges of the '80s and Acton should be proud to have a voice to keep that community spirit alive.

Of course, a newspaper is a community affair and needs the co-operation of all the people in the community to keep it solvent and pertinent. During my latest stint and in the years from 1967 to 1974 when I first served as editor I have always found the people of Acton and district supportive of and interested in their weekly visit from the Free Press.

There have been criticisms, some constructive, some destructive, but they usually were meant to improve the product.

The numerous awards over the years testifies that there has been some measure of success but there is always room for improvement. The publisher and staff work long and hard to keep abreast of the latest technology and publish a community newspaper that brings news and articles of this community and for this community. They take a strong interest in all community affairs and endeavor to serve and stimulate all worthwhile community projects.

So it is with the fullest confidence I relinquish the editorial reins to Gord Murray and his staff and wish the publisher and staff continued success in the years ahead.

I'll miss them.

Hartley Coles.

## Festival out of step?

Is the North Halton Music Festival out of step with the times.

That is particular rephrasing of the more general question: is there room for competition in the arts?

There has been in Halton for 51 years. Schools have trained choirs and sent them to compete for that many years in the festival. There was much excitement and honor in winning one of the North Halton trophies. Choirs from all over the north gather at a host school for the day's singing.

Until recent years that is the way it was. Attendance has slowly dropped off. Last May only eight of 25 schools competed.

As competition has become less popular; other forms of music, such as operettas have gained. And there are good reasons.

Some school officials do not like competition, while operettas offer pupils both music and theatrical experiences. Operettas cater to each school's audience—the

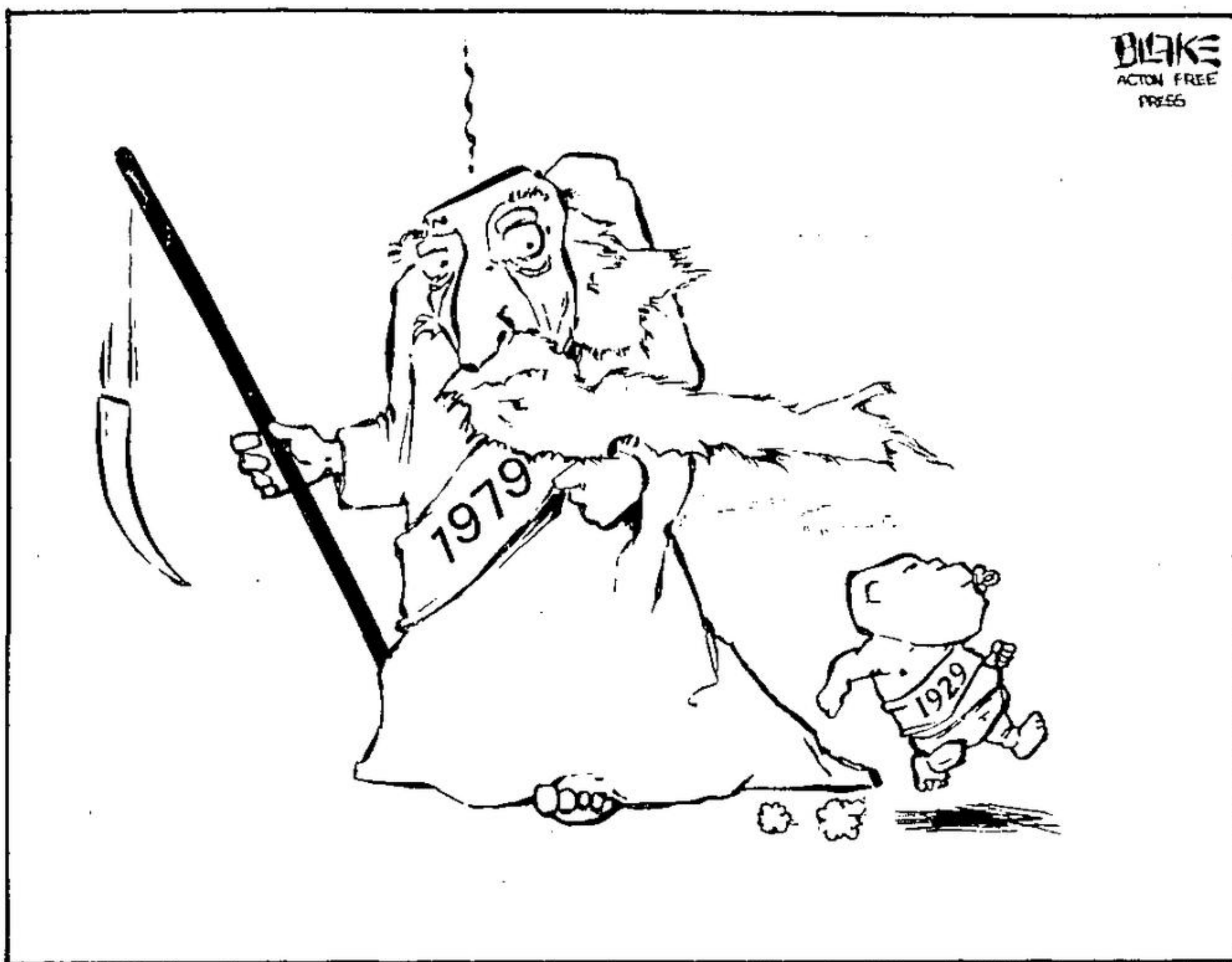
parents; so more people see the stage production than the competition.

The organizing committee of the festival has decided to suspend competition for a year. Committee members are to meet Halton Board of Education officials in order to get some direction. What is needed, for the festival to survive, is encouragement to music teachers to train the choirs. If competition is still a useful way of attracting children to music.

Maybe a one year interruption in the competition would be worthwhile.

Then perhaps it would make us more aware of how much the annual festival has meant for so many students and teacher's for over half a century.

If the North Halton Music Festival is on the block hopefully every avenue to keep it functioning will be explored before it is consigned to oblivion.



## Smiley's brimming with good will

Owing to the exigencies of the Canadian winter, the decrepitude of the Canadian postal service, which can't handle the mail in the height of summer, let alone the Christmas rush, and various other factors, too miscellaneous to mention, this may not reach you until after the holiday, when all you have left of Christmas is the colors, a red nose and a little green around the gills.

Howsomever, (and I do this only about every 12 years), I am going to extend that hoary old cliché of the 20th century, "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year," to the whole world.

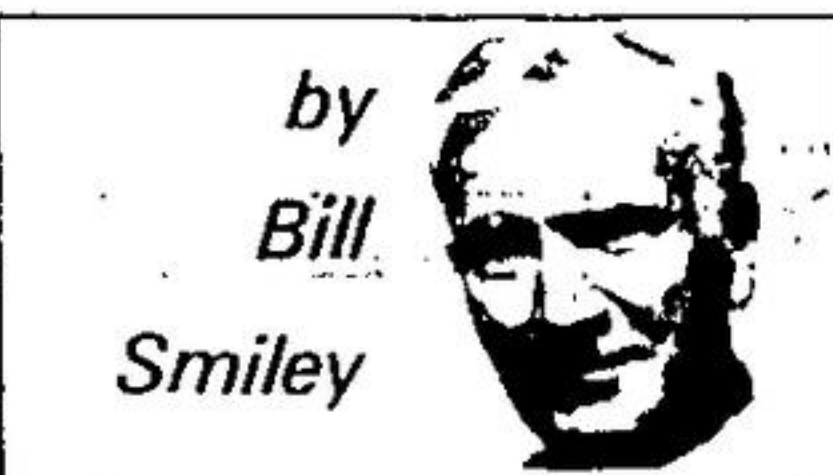
First, to the editors and publishers who have stuck by me for more than 25 years, even when this column was puerile, pernicious, petty or political (on what they thought was the wrong side). Bless you, chaps and gals, for allowing me into the homes of so many Canadians. Were I writing for only one paper, I would be in a fury of frustration that these Great Thoughts of mine were being read by only a paltry couple of thousand.

Second, and more important, to my faithful readers, who scold me, admonish me, weep for me, pray for me, and laugh for me, as we proceed together through this vale of tears.

And third, to my wife, who has borne the slings and arrows of outrageous Bill Smiley for longer than she cares to think about, and with remarkable equanimity. She has never responded in kind when I was less than kind to her, and through her, to all women.

Oh, she has responded. Yes, she has responded. And I have a broken nose, and a lump over my right ear, where she hit me with a plate of roast beef, potatoes and gravy, from a distance of eight feet, some years ago. Ah, those great old days, when you could sling roast beef around. Today it would be a plastic plate and hamburger, and I wouldn't even have a lump.

Finally, to my children and grandchildren. Just by being so rotten, they have



provided me with acres of material for this column, and brought me into touch with hundreds of parents of equally rotten kids.

Last and absolutely last, to the members of my English Department. You notice I said "my." I don't own it. I merely serve as surrogate uncle, father figure, psychiatrist, and waiting wall for the odd assortment of human beans in our department.

But they stand by me; like reeds in the winds; like twigs in an ice storm; like snow in a March sun. And they also stand behind me—well behind, when someone is after my scalp. But I depend on them. To slander me; to mock my partial plate and hoary hair.

I think that covers a fair assortment of the people I want to say M.C. and a H.H.Y. to. Except for all my friends, and they both know who they are.

Now, I don't wish to be anything less than benign on this occasion. But it may be more of a hairy Christmas and a crappy New Year than the other, if what our new Tory government has produced so far is any indication of our future.

Not another word. I'll get to that in the new year. Musn't spoil this jovial mood I've built up.

Must stick to Christmas. Well, there've been some dandies and some stinkers. Like most people, the stinkers are the ones I remember.

One was when my mother had prepared a great Christmas dinner, for about five o'clock, working from 6 a.m. My older brother and sister went off skiing with a friend. My kid brother and I went off to the

special Christmas matinee. We'd all promised to be home by four. We got home about six, the dinner ruined. A modern mother would have bawled the daylight's out of us. My mother just looked so hurt it hurt my heart.

Another was when my total loot under the Christmas tree was one suit of long underwear, with the backflap. That wasn't so bad. We knew there was a depression on, whatever that was. But going out and meeting the other kids, some of whose fathers were working, and exchanging, "Whadjia get?", was painful. How do you describe to a guy who has just got a pair of skates the joy of receiving longjohns?

But there have been some great Christmases too, and they linger. Decorating the tree with tiny kids looking on. Then going out to a Christmas Eve party, (the most stupid social occasion in our calendar), arriving home at 4 a.m., doing up the kids' stockings and hanging them up, and getting one hour's sleep before tiny hands are plucking at your hair, eyes, nose, and treble voices. "Daddy, get up. We want to see what Santa Claus brought." Oy veh!

Another great Christmas, strangely enough, was in prison camp. We had saved for months the choice items from our rapidly diminishing Red Cross parcels. From the graham crackers, chocolate, powdered milk and other stuff, we'd made a magnificent Christmas cake.

From the prunes and sugar, we'd made a potent Christmas brew, enough for about a quart each. Dinner began with hors d'oeuvres, a piece of cheese the size of a dime on a piece of sour German bread the size of a quarter. Then the entree. Canned salmon and smashed spuds. Then the coup de grace, the cake, like lead but full of calories. And all washed down with a wine that was neither red nor white, but sort of mud-colored. A memorable evening.

Enough. Enough. Think back about your dandies and your stinkers, and make this the best holiday season you've ever had, with a sober thought about the reason for it all, and what it means to you.

## Letters

### Still no understanding after 2000 years

Dear Sir,

Bethlehem - ephratha?

Gloom - doom or boom?  
Christmas 1979 seem to be over. The remains of the presents; boxes - tinsels - and trees lay as rubble at the roads for the town to be picked up for the dump and Saturday The Toronto Star comes out and you could read in "Canadian Weekend" about Doom or Boom for 1980 and if you read it about The Best and The Worst. Then the future looks quite bleak.

Oh come all ye faithful. Where is the joy to the world is it already gone after one day of seeing the great light of

Bethlehem - ephratha?

Instead of having faith and saying, that another year is dawning, Dear Father let it be, another year of service for Thee, as we sing, we predict and worry.

It is comical. That God comes to us as a little baby in a manger. Take a second look, but if we are intending to leave Him there and turn our back from Bethlehem and say, that was nice, we have very little understanding of The message because our same kid, Jesus, later on says; To me is given all power in heaven and on earth.

John Kamminga.

If we do not live out of that knowledge, yes, then our future looks grim. Where is the Christian contribution for the news media. Don't we have spiritual leaders anymore? Is there still no room in The Inn after 2,000 years?

There always was and always will be a future for them that rely on God's faithfulness. Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah.

Then we still predict and are concerned but not as if we must do it alone. Have a happy-prosperous New Year.

## Back Issues

### 10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Wednesday, January 7, 1970  
Fate of the Acton railway station will hinge on the result of a long-awaited public hearing in the council chambers next Tuesday.  
Officials of H.K. Porter declined comment about the closing of the Acton Thermoid division.  
The new curling club had its first New Year's Eve dance. The Legion had their first New Year's Eve buffet.  
A vague proposal by Ontario Hydro to place a hydro line through the north-west corner of Nassagaweya has left Nassagaweya councillors puzzled and angry. Deputy reeve Gordon Agnew thought the plan could be a cover-up for a super highway to connect Hamilton to a new jetport.  
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Shortill took over Ballinfad store, while Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Smith moved to the Shortill Home.  
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Smith celebrated their golden wedding.  
Snowmobiles zip around the school grounds night after night.  
Not one deer has been seen at Rockwood park and snowmobiles are blamed. The snowmobile operators are also snapping off trees.

### 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, January 7, 1960  
Acton mourns the loss of former municipal councillor Fred J. McCutcheon who died in his 70th year.  
Newly-appointed members of the Acton High School district board held their inaugural meeting Monday. Col. G. O. Brown, secretary-treasurer of the now disbanded North Halton high school district board, administered the oath of office to the board's first chairman J.H. Creighton, vice-chairman M.M. Coles, Duncan Moffat, E.S. Force and Wm. Coon. Wm. Middleton was selected as secretary-treasurer.  
Acton arena will be initiated for the first time this year when the children will enjoy free skating Friday.  
Richard Harris starts his 36th year as Rockwood correspondent for the Free Press.  
Judy Duby was the youngest entrant in Ontario to win perfect marks in her grade one theory exam.  
First steps were taken to form a Lions club in Acton. Alex Johnson was chosen president and Jack Doherty secretary-treasurer.

### 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, January 2, 1910  
On Monday evening the annual Sunday School entertainment and Christmas treat of Knox Sunday School was held in the Town Hall. The scholars who merited prizes for regular attendance were Bella Rosszell, Marquerite Rosszell, Helen Mainprize, Elva McDowell, Doris McDonald, Grace Stewart, Jack Smith, Jack Graham, Roderick Hyder, Donald Ryder, Norman Wright, Edward Hansen, Harvey Hassard, Martin Hassard, Billy Mainprize.  
A highly-respected citizen of this Community from 1862 to 1885 Samuel McLam died at Point Edward. Mr. and Mrs. McLam were the second couple to be married in what is now Acton United Church. With the trade of carpenter he joined the G.T.R. in bridge building and construction work.  
For a number of years Acton Chamber of Commerce has worked to secure desirable changes in the arrival of trains and delivery of mail in Acton. One of these changes would enable the public to receive their mail in the evening rather than wait until the following morning.  
Mr. and Mrs. William Williams celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. For many years he conducted a boot and shoe business on Mill St. and he was a member of council for several years.

### 100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday January 1, 1880  
The council for 1880 was elected by acclamation Monday, reeve D. Henderson, councillors W.H. Storey, C.S. Smith, D.D. Christie, N. McGarvin.  
Mr. Christie, ex-reeve, reported that nothing of importance had happened at County Council but he had attended every meeting. He thought future generations would be thankful to the retiring council for the purchase of property for a cemetery.  
A meeting of the singers of Acton is requested, to meet with Prof. Harrington of Guelph, to consider bringing out an opera or oratorio.  
This week the Free Press carrier boys present their annual address and best bow to our patrons in town, whom they hope to find as "flush" and full of benevolence as befits the season.  
The annual installation of Officers and Festival of Walker Lodge was held on St. John's Day, 27th December.  
The excellent sleighing has done a lot to improve business.

## Golden Agers enjoy Tree

The 1979 "Living Christmas Tree" at the People's Church, Toronto, was thoroughly enjoyed by a busload of Acton Golden Agers on Sunday, Dec. 16. A 75 piece orchestra, 100 voice mixed choir in an enormous sized Christmas tree, a men's choir, children's choir, a dozen bell ringers along with several soloists, including Lloyd Knight, who is a superb soloist in the church, and Barbara Law of Texas as guest soloist. As this church

holds over 2500 people, we were very fortunate to have excellent front seats due to the efforts of our transportation convener Laura Dennis and her assistants in securing group seating.  
Dinner at the Swiss Chalet, Brampton, completed a most enjoyable afternoon. Laura has tickets now available for members to see "Irish Rovers" on Wednesday Jan. 23 at 7 p.m.  
A pot luck dinner was enjoyed at the regular

evening meeting night December 19 by the Golden Agers at St. Alban's Hall which was decorated in the Christmas theme. All partook of a well laden table. An impromptu program of readings, story telling, carols etc. ending with "We wish you a Merry Christmas" by the choir brought the Christmas evening to a close.  
We were saddened to hear of the sudden death of one of our members, Elva Masales.