

Leather tales . .

(Continued from page 1)

the 1800s the Grand Trunk Railway Station was known as Acton West, to distinguish this stop from Acton East which was in Quebec. However, another version is that the stop in Quebec was called Acton Vale.

*Beverly House on Church St., where the apartments now stand, was a magnificent mansion for the Beardmores and contained no less than 15 fireplaces.

*There was a park in the middle of town called the Commons and it covered the equivalent of two blocks today.

*Fairview Cemetery's opening created a real controversy. Opened in 1886, there were fears the remains would contaminate the town's water supply, a spring nearby. It didn't happen. Some also thought the new cemetery should be closer to town. Cows were getting into Pioneer Cemetery and making a mess.

*There were four owners of the Beardmore tannery before that family acquired it. The founder of the leather industry here was Abraham Nelles.

*Gordon Beardmore, a great-great grandson of G.L. Beardmore, the head of the firm, lives today in Toronto and has provided Leathertown with a photograph which shows Beverly House in the background. Actonians had told the researchers Gordon Beardmore lived in Montreal. Finding this descendant of the family has resulted in the girls uncovering more facts about Acton.

*The founder of Beardmore, George Lisant Beardmore, is buried at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Toronto along with other family members. The Beardmores have a huge monument while a much more famous Canadian, former Prime Minister Mackenzie King buried beside the Beardmores has only a modest grave marker.

*Another Beardmore descendant, Margaret Larkin, has been located in Newmarket. She is the great-great granddaughter of Torrence Beardmore and she can remember him being in charge of the tannery.

*The grave of Ezra Adams, a founder of Acton, has been found in Drayton. After he sold his land here he went to Drayton and helped found that community. He was the first postmaster of Drayton. The remains of another Adams, Ransom, were moved to Drayton from Pioneer Cemetery.

*Almost since there have been settlers here there has been a leather industry because Acton had a lot of hemlock trees, hemlock bark was crucial to the tanning of hides in those days. When the hemlock trees disappeared so did the industry for a time. For about five years even Beardmore was virtually closed down until sole leather began being made here.

*Gloves coming out of Acton firms like the Storey Glove Company were sold nationwide and were regarded as being among the best in the British Empire.

*During World War II a mosquito bomber was named the Acton Bomber because so much money had been raised here in the sale of Victory Bonds.

*The old Stone School, where St. Joseph's is now and which the Leathertown committee hopes to acquire someday for a museum was originally the private residence of one of the town's wealthiest men, Sydney Smith, and it was called Fairview Place.

*The first person buried in Fairview Cemetery was George Steel and his brother had owned the cemetery land.

*The first Beardmore home in Acton was a small building on the site of the present Canadian Tire store. Later there were bowling greens on this property.

*The tanning vats filled with hemlock extract were useful for practical jokes. New workers were forced to walk the plank over the vats and it was tilted so they'd fall in. This fate also awaited workers who weren't



Anne Lindsay reads Free Press microfilm searching out the secrets of Leathertown.

*Maria, John, Frederick, Agnes, Ransom and Wilbur Streets were all named after the children of the original settlers of Acton, the Adams.

As can be seen by this sampling of historical information the girls have collected, they have been busy researching not just our leather heritage but also the entire community's history, and that has swung some old-time residents over to support them in their efforts.

A few older residents have expressed fears to the girls that the name of the town will be changed from Acton to Leathertown. Once they understand Leathertown is just a promotional tool to put Acton on the map they are more "positive." Only a few people think Leathertown and the research is a waste of time.

A good number have granted the researchers interviews, the part of the job they enjoy best. They feel there are still many more people who have information to share. Some have declined to be interviewed, but have suggested the girls talk to someone else.

"We really appreciate the help we have been given, but we need a lot more," they say. They can be reached at 853-3680.

Also, they realize they may have some facts wrong. This can easily happen when one is doing historical research. Or a resident may have a slightly different recollection of an event. They encourage anyone to call them and disagree. They are eager to hear as many versions of the town's early days as possible so they can compile as accurate an account as they can.

Besides interviews, the girls have been researching Acton through the microfilm and bound copies of the Free Press. Reading the microfilm is the most unpleasant task they have faced. So far they've read through over 60 years of this paper.

While they've found out a lot by reading the back issues of this paper, it has also posed problems. Since newspaper accounts depend on remarks of the community citizens and news is in a state of flux there are contradictions. They just think they've got a fact nailed down and in another issue it has been changed.

But overall the Free Press files have proved to be the best source. They've been able to confirm many facts people told them in interviews with newspaper reports. Like the paper, Acton's Early Days has posed problems, with numerous contradictions.

Laurel has already starting doing sketches for tour displays and will spend most of her time through the rest of the summer doing drawings while Anne and Elizabeth wrap up their research and compile the final report.

Local Elizabeth Fry Society members support community service orders



Eldon Comfort, shown here in a file photo, is one of several local residents involved with the work of the Elizabeth Fry Society.

A number of local residents involved in the Peel-Halton Elizabeth Fry Society are hoping judges will hand down more community service orders as an alternative to incarceration for offenders in north Halton.

In a recent interview Eldon Comfort, RR 4 Acton, and Cathy Shane, the community service order co-ordinator, outlined the program which they believe is an excellent way to rehabilitate offenders. Comfort is the chairman of the Elizabeth Fry Society's community advisory committee. Other Acton residents on the committee are Margaret MacKenzie-Chapman, John Kavanagh and

LeAnne Taylor. Community Service Orders are relatively new, but they are being handed down at a rapidly increasing rate. Recently an Acton man was convicted of assault and sentenced to perform 40 hours of community service working for the BIA cleaning up lots behind stores and performing other useful chores.

Community service orders were born across Ontario over three years ago and agencies like the Elizabeth Fry Society contracted to administer the program as a sentencing

alternative for judges. Community work sentences are generally an alternative to jail term, but can also be an alternative to fines.

So far there have been 13 community service orders handed down for north Halton offenders and cases are being worked up for three other people facing the courts.

Hours of service have ranged from 30 to 200 hours and work has included picking up litter, driving clients of Halton Women's Place and the Children's Aid Society to doctors' appointments, helping at ARC Industries and assisting with Halton Hills parks and recreation programs.

In May alone five people performed 65 hours of community service in north Halton and the work is always volunteer duties, not a replacement for paid employment. The chores likely wouldn't get done if it wasn't for community service orders. Comfort says there are two-way benefits to

society in community service orders. It costs taxpayers \$50 a day to keep a person in jail while the community service order program costs just \$3 a day. Sometimes sentences also include repairing damage done by vandals or making restitution to the victim.

"The program, in my view, also has tremendous benefits to the offender as well. It improves their self-esteem," Comfort said. Comfort notes most offenders have low self-esteem and often feel guilty; are ashamed of what they have done.

When a person is placed on a community service order sentence they are interviewed to determine their interests and skills so their time will be spent in a meaningful way. When they are doing something they view as worthwhile and it helps relieve their conscience. "They feel they are repaying their debt to society so it has a therapeutic effect," Comfort declared.

So far none of the people in north Halton on community service orders have wound up back in court. Provincially only 12 per cent of people placed on community service orders have been in trouble with the law again. The repeat rate for regular forms of probation is 35.7 per cent in Ontario and 60 per cent of people incarcerated wind up back behind bars.

In Peel where the program has been in operation for some time only seven or eight of the 250 to 300 offenders involved have faced charges again.

Likely offenders for community service orders are male or female and over 16. They've been found guilty of assault, property related crimes like theft under \$200, attempted theft, break and enter,

possession of stolen property, possession of drugs, careless use of weapons, etc. All of the crimes considered for community service orders are predominantly non-violent and non-sexual. Most people have no previous record of trouble with the law.

Since community service orders go hand in hand with terms of probation failure to perform the work is a breach of probation and results in a quick return to court and jail term.

Met up with a former resident you haven't seen for years. Prove it's a small world by calling in the news to On the Leavell at 853-2010 or 853-3224.

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Actario winners

Bella Maye Roszell, 9A Willow St. North became the first person to win Actario's \$350 cash prize for the second time, on Saturday.

Miss Roszell also won a portable television for being on hand for the draw.

Merchant bonus prize winners were:

Vouchers from Family Cleaners, IGA, Acton Deli, and Acton Bowling Lanes were won by Werner Hess, 88 Acton Blvd. Margaret Wilson, 238 Mill St. East, and Ed Leatherland, 112 Acton Blvd. won vouchers from Wooden Heart Restaurant, Stedmans, Eds In 'N Out, and Acton Photo and Camera. Vouchers from Jolliffe Shoes, Acton Deli, Superior Shoe Repair, and Family Cleaners, were won by Mrs. Gwen Tyler, 24 Mowbray Place and Tracey Tyler, 350 Peel St. Charlie and Florence Gough, RR 4 Acton won vouchers from Nielsen's, Family Cleaners, Family Restaurant and Jug City.

Got an interesting tid-bit of news about Acton or area people. Call Helen at 853-2010 or 853-3224 for On the Leavell.

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