

Elliott restores Picton museum's organ

George Elliott has brought back to life an organ which is over 125-years-old and sat idle and deteriorating for about the last 90 years.

The old Tracker organ at the Prince Edward County Museum, the former Mary Magdalene Church, was in pretty bad shape when Elliott and a former Acton resident, Don MacDermid, the museum curator, started working on it.

Now it rumbles and booms as it did when it was new back in the 1850s. The people of Picton and area got to hear the old organ for the first time last month and a grand opening is planned for the museum next spring.

Elliott first came across the organ in 1975. He had camped at Outlet Beach and visited relatives in the Picton area for years, but always assumed the museum was still a church. One day he saw the

"open" sign at the museum and went in. What he discovered was the beautiful old organ. George climbed in and around the organ, inspecting it with the help of a flashlight.

He found the chest was in good shape, but the rest was a mess. The interior was full of mice nests and fallen plaster and there had been water damage. Every one of the 380 wood and metal pipes was missing.

Elliott has considerable experience in organ restoration and he knew a professional job, including replacing the pipes, could cost as much as \$20,000, so he decided to do the job himself. His first organ restoration project was at Trinity United Church in 1960. Despite being quite busy as director of music at Trinity as well as Citizen's Band Leader and a biology professor at the University of Guelph, George

found time to restore another organ which today is in his study. The old Tracker in Picton was his third such project.

The Tracker project stalled for a few years and was almost given up; restoration cost was going to be too high; before Elliott heard that Keates Organ of Acton had acquired the rights to an old organ that partially survived a fire. The insides had been gutted but the pipes were intact and George bought the pipes on behalf of the museum for \$2,000.

He and MacDermid, who lived in Acton and worked at Beardmore during the World War II years, completely dismantled the organ. MacDermid cleaned and lubricated all the moving parts, rebuilt the bellows and replaced the leather flap valves.

Elliott spent many weekends in Picton lending a hand and took home many parts

and reconstructed them in the basement of his Acton home.

The pipes from the organ Keates had acquired are slightly larger than the pipes the Tracker originally had, as well as being made of tin and lead, so the organ's sound now is a little louder and it has a deeper tone than it did when it first went into Mary Magdalene Church, Elliott notes.

When the time came to tune the organ, George brought along some expert help. Jeff Carr and Ian McGugan, both with Keates organ, as well as an organ tuner from Fergus spent about 12 hours adjusting the pipes. The tuning was painstaking but not difficult, Elliott reports. The metal pipes were tuned by making them longer or shorter. To lower the note, a cone was placed on top of the pipe and



George Elliott

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Citadel on Mill St. for Salvation Army

The Acton Salvation Army hopes to have a new storey-and-a-half citadel or church built and opened on Mill St. East by next fall.

Late last year Halton Hills Committee of Adjustment approved some minor variances for sideyard, frontyard, and parking lot setbacks for the two properties involved, 114 Mill St. East and 121 Church St. East. There is a house standing on the Church St. lot while the Mill St. lot is vacant.

The approximately 5,500 square foot church will front on Mill St. with parking for the 26 cars and access off Church St.

This church will cost about \$500,000 to build and construction will take approximately four months. Lt. Lorne Pritchett said "I hope by this time next year we will have forgotten all about the opening."

Purchase of the Church St. property closed in late December and with Committee of Adjustment approval the Salvation Army has just one more hurdle to clear, Halton Hills Site Plan Control approval.

Lt. Pritchett said they want to have their final plans in the hands of the municipality "as soon as possible." The town would then set down any requirements of changes for the building of the church. "We want to try and start building as early as possible."

This is the third site the Salvation Army has made plans to build on. The first was 114 Mill St. East, the front part of the present plan, where a house was located and burned down before they acquired the property. That project couldn't proceed because the site was just too small. Next the Salvation Army planned to build its citadel at the corner of Ransom St. and Main St. South but that fell through because unforeseen difficulties prevented the deal from closing, Pritchett said.

The new church will contain a sanctuary or assembly hall seating 120 people. Currently, Pritchett said.

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Free Press price up five cents

The single copy price of the Acton Free Press was increased by five cents today (Wednesday) publisher Don McDonald announced.

This price increase from 25 cents to 30 cents applies to both home delivery and store sales. McDonald said the increase, the first in 16 months, was necessary to help cover constantly rising production and printing costs, increasing distribution costs, energy price hikes, higher postage rates and wage increases.

The price of annual subscriptions rises from \$12 to \$15.



Crews attached the mobile re-railer's huge hook to the front of the derailed VIA locomotive and lifted the engine onto the tracks. The train blocked the Mill St. East crossing for nearly five hours Saturday night. Passengers continued their journey by bus.

Derailed VIA Rail train blocks Mill crossing nearly five hours

The derailment of VIA passenger train 667 Saturday night in Acton blocked Mill St. East at the rail crossing for nearly five hours.

Deborah Etsten, VIA information officer, said the official CN explanation for the derailment was there was a "build-up of ice on the guard rail of the switches." She described the incident as "very minor" and all investigation of the matter has been completed.

Derailed of one axle, or two wheels, of locomotive 6539 occurred at about 7:45 p.m. and the engine and five passenger cars didn't clear the crossing until 11:34 p.m.

Police diverted hundreds of cars and trucks from Mill St. to Eastern and Bower Avenues and Wallace St. In addition the crossing at Main St. North was closed briefly during the evening twice while a huge crane was put on and off the track.

After 10 p.m. the large crane, called a mobile re-railer, arrived on the scene from Toronto. Later it was taken to the Main St. North crossing, driven onto the track and moved down to the derailed locomotive. The mobile re-railer has tires so it can be driven on the road as well as train wheels so it can go on track.

At 11:10 the re-railer was in front of the locomotive and crews attached its huge hook to the front of the engine. It lifted the locomotive about four or five feet in the air and after some jockeying around, the engine was placed back on the track. The entire process took 15 minutes.

There was no damage to the locomotive, cars or tracks from the derailment and the train continued on to London. It returned to Toronto, carrying passengers, as train 662 on Sunday.

An Acton resident, parked in his car at the crossing when the derailment occurred, recalled 667 was stopped on the siding behind the old Hide House waiting for another train to go by.

The eyewitness said the train then moved out slowly and the locomotive had just cleared the crossing when it lurched ahead slightly. He said it appeared the train had hit something, it looked like there was some snow or ice across the track.

Around 9:30 p.m. three Charterways buses arrived on the scene and the slightly over 100 train passengers were hustled through the cold and wind onto the buses to continue their journey. The bulk of passengers were headed for Guelph, Kitchener and Stratford and a few for St. Mary's and London. None of the buses were filled, but each contained passengers bound for different destinations.

A passenger from St. Mary's said people on the train were "sort of upset" by the delay, but once they were informed buses were on the way they relaxed.

When the derailment occurred there were a "couple of bangs" a "crash" and the train stopped dead.

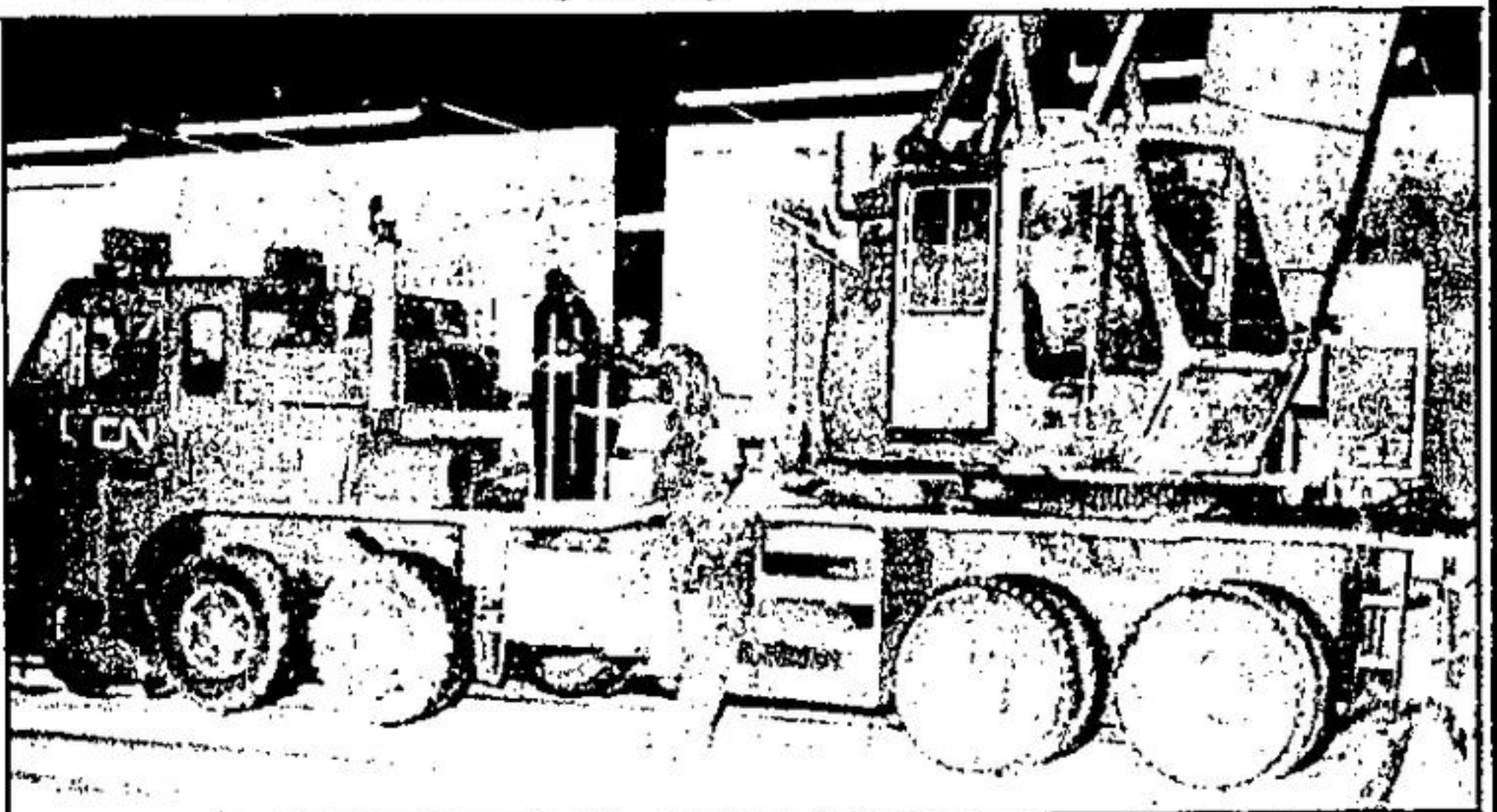
The train was still on the siding and they

thought the train had hit a car; that someone had tried to beat the train across Mill St.

Passengers weren't sure what had happened until 10 to 15 minutes after the train came to its sudden halt. The "conductors all took off" moments after the derailment. Passengers were finally told "the locomotive jumped the track" because of a build up of ice between the siding track and cement at the crossing.

Throughout the evening, crowds of onlookers gathered, braving the cold winds to see what had happened. About 20 were on hand to see the crane do its job.

In addition there were a couple of dozen CN and VIA workers on the scene, including CN Police.



The mobile re-railer was needed for only 15 minutes Saturday night to put the VIA train's locomotive back on the track.



It's a happy new year....

...for Jim and Brenda McArthur, R.R. 1, Rockwood, who became the proud parents of Julie Lynn, born 5:21 a.m. January 1, becoming the Acton and area New Year's baby. Julie goes home today (Wednesday) to big brother Glenn, 20 months. Julie is a pretty prompt lady, being due on December 31 and trying her damndest to be born that day. She was Guelph General Hospital's second baby in 1982, the first, another girl, beating her out by 21 minutes.

Photo by HELEN MURRAY

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Read about a scrumptious cake. Turn to page 5.

Liberal leadership hopefuls speak out. Details on page B4.

Wally Beaver has plans for Halton's schools. More on page B5.

Local grocers switch to kilograms. See page B6.

Man knifed while at party

A New Year's Eve party turned violent when a Bramalea man was slashed across the face with a knife.

However, Guelph OPP are having difficulty investigating the matter as neither victim nor anyone else at the party will identify the attacker, or even answer police questions.

The incident occurred at approximately 2 a.m. Friday morning, according to OPP, at an RR 2, Acton residence after an argument.

Someone at the party called the police, but upon their arrival everyone refused to co-operate. The victim doesn't want the matter pursued further.

The matter is still under investigation, as police wait for someone to come forward with more information.

Police do not know if the victim received stitches or medical assistance as they did not escort him to hospital.