

The Acton Free Press

TELEPHONE (519) 863-2010
 Business and Editorial Office
 Founded in 1875

Published every Wednesday by Metroland Printing & Publishing Ltd. at 59 Willow Street, Acton, Ontario, L7J 2M2. Telephone (519) 863-2010. Subscriptions: Single copies 30¢ each, \$15.00 per year in Canada, \$30.00 in all countries other than Canada.

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Second class mail registration Number 0615.

Must turn the Y around

Every taxpayer has a stake in keeping the Acton Y alive and financially healthy.

Efforts by a handful of Y loyalists are underway to give the grand old building on Mill St. a fresh face and save it from deterioration.

However more volunteers are needed to help with the work.

More importantly, funds are needed to not only finance physical improvements to the building, but also to pay for program additions and expansions.

The Acton Y has a long, proud history of community service. It is a unique service in that it has always been run pretty much by volunteers and paid for solely through donations and fund raising ventures.

In the past the Y was the thing to belong to, there really wasn't much else in Acton in the way of community recreation services outside of minor sports, and besides the church, there weren't a lot of community organizations to belong to.

As the town has grown, community organizations have flourished, draining away much needed volunteers.

At the same time government funds have been poured into municipal recreation programs and new community groups have helped slice up the local donations pie into smaller pieces.

Y board members have issued a dire warning, if there isn't financial aid and volunteers to help with programs and maintain the building it will "ultimately fall into disuse."

Even if you never avail yourself of the wide variety of leisure time activities offered by the Y, or programs offered by other organizations like Halton Hills recreation department, you have a vested interest in keeping the Y going.

This year the Acton Y will have provided programs for about 360 people. There are very few areas of duplication between Y and municipal or other recreation programs.

If the Y was to disappear there would be a leisure time activity void in the community which would need to be filled for a large number of citizens, and if the past is any example government would have to step in and fill the gap.

Halton Hills having to provide programs now offered by the Y would add to already hefty recreation costs. Likely more staff would be needed in the recreation department to administer programs, other costs would also mount. Additional costs would have to be paid either through higher taxes, or less likely with steeply increased user-pay fees right across the board.

It has been proven time and again, volunteers and community organizations can run things for less money and more efficiently than any government.

All recreation and community minded people should be climbing on the bandwagon now to turn things around for the Y. The Y has filled an important role in Acton's past and has an important role to fill in the future.—G.M.

This is the time to build

There's been a lot of criticism and even snide remarks or snickers about Halton Hills and the Acton Business Improvement Area (BIA) buying two homes on Church St. for new off-street parking.

People think it's a little ludicrous for the two bodies to be spending money on improving parking when so many stores have closed up downtown.

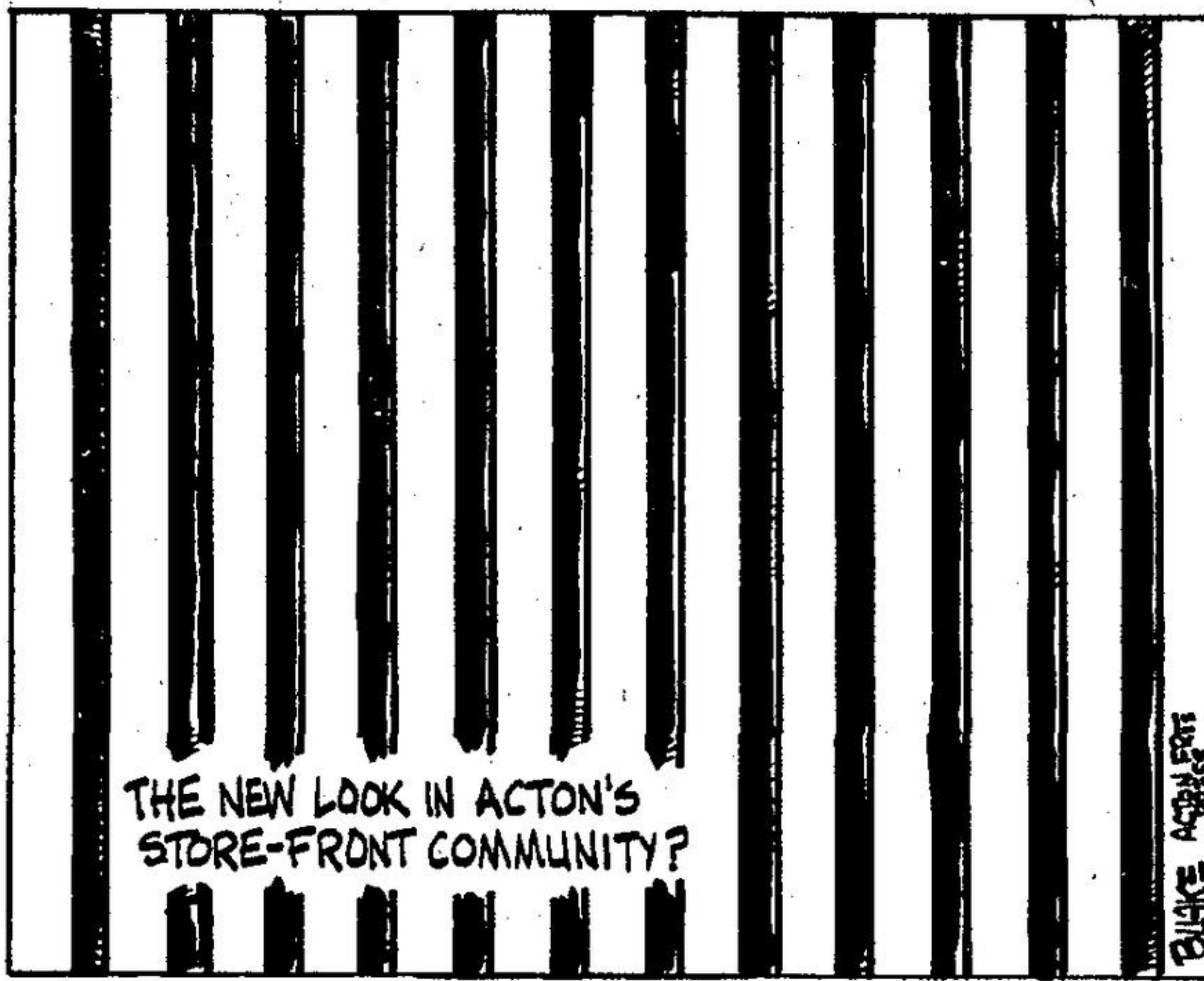
However, what people don't seem to consider is that for years parking downtown has been a problem, shoppers have been saying they don't shop locally because they can't get parked.

This present recession which has ravaged downtown won't last forever, likely in a few years downtown will be filled with new shops in now vacant stores, more property could

even be converted to commercial uses in the years ahead.

But when good times return they won't be as healthy for downtown Acton if the parking problems haven't been solved.

In fact, if there is to be more parking downtown this is the perfect time to do it, and not just because provincial loan money is available now at a cheap interest rate. Had the BIA and Town not taken advantage of the government loan program now, the funds would have been spent somewhere else in Ontario, and might not have been available for Acton in the future. And with land, construction and material prices currently soft because of the recession, providing more parking downtown Acton is a bargain now compared to what it would cost when the economy recovers.—G.M.



From the editor's desk

Eight hours of prime television viewing

by Gord Murray
 Free Press Editor

If you happened to miss the three part mini-series on television last week, The Blue and the Gray, you missed eight of the best hours of TV yet.

(Well, actually there was less than eight hours of good TV when you subtract the commercials, but then the IBM and Polaroid commercials were better than most too.)

If you didn't see the film, briefly it was about two related families, one in Pennsylvania and one in Virginia, who were on the opposite sides of the war between the States in the 1860s. It covered how they personally handled the tragedy of America's bloodiest conflict; more Americans were killed in the Civil War than in World Wars I and II combined.

I don't think I've ever seen a film, with the possible exception of Apocalypse Now, which chilled me to the bone with the horror of war quite like The Blue and the Gray.

There was really, considering it was a war movie, very little outright violence. Not often did you see, except in battle charges, people being killed. And when men were being shot it was just a quick glimpse of someone falling with smoke swirling everywhere.

But the horror of war came through loud and clear. It was the after battle scenes which stuck so graphically and terrifyingly in the memory. Fields littered with corpses. Dead, dead, everywhere. For me this film brought back a flood of memories, albeit quite vague.

My father was a Civil War buff. (I guess it should be 'is' a Civil War buff, I haven't talked to him about it for quite a while, but I imagine he still has a keen interest in this and the other wars.)

When I was little a number of our family vacations were taken up with travelling around visiting Civil War battlefields and other historic spots connected with this famed conflict.

I calculate I must have been 7, 8 and 9

when we were taking these trips. I remember waiting four hours outside a church in Gettysburg for then president Dwight Eisenhower and his wife to come out before returning to their huge farm nearby. Since he left office in early 1961 and I'm now 31, volla I must have been 7, 8 or 9 when we were in Gettysburg. I can't for the life of me remember if we saw the President, something tells me he wasn't at church that morning, wasn't even in Gettysburg.

Anyway, watching The Blue and the Gray I kept thinking back to those trips and wondering if I had been to the battlefield where the war was being re-enacted on film.

Being so young a lot of what we went and saw was over my head, and besides at that age if you've seen one battlefield you've seen them all.

I knew with certainty I'd been to Gettysburg. I know I've seen the spot where Abraham Lincoln read his famous speech.

Seems to me I was in Richmond, capital of the Confederacy, too. I became ill there and had to spend a few days in bed in a rather unique motel, each unit was like a little brick cabin. I know my untimely illness put a damper on Dad's tour plans.

But after that about all I can remember is going place to place and seeing a whole lot of cannons with little piles of cannon balls beside them.

Checking with my mother I learned I've been to the site of the battle of Bull Run; battle of the Wilderness; Appomattox Courthouse where Lee surrendered to Grant; Atlanta which was burned and other historic sites in Georgia which Sherman marched through; Fredericksburg Va., someplace called Chancellorsburg in Tennessee and Stony Mountain in the same state. That's just to name a few of the Civil War spots we went to that she could remember.

Joan says I was also in Vicksburg, a major scene in the Blue and Gray, but

since they went to Louisiana when I was 1 or 2 she agreed there was no way I'd have a memory of that, even vague.

Of course on one of these trips we visited Washington. There must have been three or four Civil War tours before the Murrays turned their attentions to retracing the Revolutionary War (I remember a lot about visits to places like Boston, Lexington and Concord, Philadelphia) etc.

I'm sure when and if he reads this my father will be disappointed to learn that during these trips the Civil War history didn't exactly sink in for all time.

However, he'll be pleased to learn that a pleasant trip a year ago last month and seeing the Blue and Gray has kindled interest in me to go and see all those places I failed to absorb my first trip.

Like the rest of the Civil War tours, our visit to Washington was quite vague, though little clearer than most of my memories.

Last year, on an eagerly awaited vacation I visited Washington for four days all by my lonesome, and as interesting a four days I can't recall.

I had a ball. I went through four Smithsonian museums: aircraft and space, American history, natural history, and art; to the Ford theatre where Lincoln was shot and the house across the street where he died; to the Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials; to the Capital building; FBI headquarters; the Washington Masonic memorial in Alexandria; saw the King of Spain welcomed on the White House lawn; viewed the Kennedy graves and Lee's home in Arlington cemetery; and visited lots of other attractions.

Now I think I'll plan a motor trip by myself to Gettysburg for sure, and then stop to see a few things I missed in Washington, before moving on to the Civil War battlefields in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia.

Better late than never, eh Pop?

Back issues

10 years ago

November 22, 1972

Basic new telephone rates in the Acton exchange would go up five cents a month in 1973 and 30 cents a month in 1974 if the Canadian Transport Commission approves increases ask by Bell Canada.

Esqueving Council has given the town of Milton a flat "No" in answer to a request that they consider the use of a pit at Milton Brick as a sanitary landfill site for Milton garbage.

Mr. and Mrs. G.S. Mathews, Mrs. F. McCutcheon and Mrs. A. Robinson have returned from a trip to the West Coast and California of several weeks.

Miss Dorothy Simmons from Acton W.I. and Mrs. M. Nellis and Mrs. W. Lasby from Dublin W.I. attended the Guelph Area Convention at Stratford recently.

Mr. and Mrs. R.H. Elliott were both in Guelph General Hospital at the same time, with rooms near each other. Mrs. Elliott is home now and Mr. Elliott expects to be back soon.

20 years ago

November 22, 1952

Petitions signed by Acton businessmen were presented to council Tuesday evening in an attempt to establish a by-law for store closing hours. The present by-law is stores closed on Wednesday afternoons and the merchants have adopted an all day closing Monday.

Fire completely destroyed Hrtel Leibovich's barn and pigs of R.R. 3 Acton, on Wednesday morning.

Construction of the new Christian Reformed Church auditorium has begun. Van der Burg Construction, Georgetown, began work at the site.

Bruce Andrews is home from Seton Hall, South Orange, New Jersey, for the American Thanksgiving holiday.

The Breezes has been sold to Mr. and Mrs. John B. Wood, of Toronto, who are living there now. They intend to open it as a park, as Joe Jocke did.

Provincial Constable and Mrs. Archie MacPherson and sons of St. Thomas, were recent visitors with former's parents, Mr. and Mrs. A.M. MacPherson, Arthur Street, Acton.

50 years ago

November 17, 1902

Mr. John Marshall, Clerk of Nasagaweya Township, who was injured by a fall a week or so ago, is gradually improving.

Miss Ruth Gibson, of Acton, assisted the choir of the Grand Valley Church on their anniversary occasion last week.

On Thursday evening the family of Mrs. Arch. McPherson gathered at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Jas. Symon, where the eightieth birthday of the mother was observed.

Mr. and Mrs. John Kennedy and children, of Detroit, Mich., are visiting at the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. E.F. Kennedy.

Mr. and Mrs. R.H. Elliott and family moved from Comber last week and are now getting comfortably settled in their new residence on Church Street.

Miss Frances Hurst, of Metcalfe, Ontario, spent the weekend at her home here.

75 years ago

November 21, 1907

Contractor Forbes is finishing the foundation of Mr. P. Sayer's new residence on Church Street. The section above the ground line is being built of cut stone.

Mr. W.J. Gould, who has been manager of the Acton House, for nearly two years, has resigned and Mr. W.D. Smith has assumed the position. Brick work on the home of Mr. John Cameron, on Main Street is nearing completion.

Dr. Ault has taken the office in the Perryman Block, lately occupied by Dr. Hore, where he may be called during the day.

The repairs and improvements to St. Alban's Church are nearing completion. Everything will be in good shape for re-opening on December 1st.

100 years ago

November 30, 1882

There's a good assortment of skates for sale at J.C. Hill's from 60 cents to \$2. Fresh Oysters by the quart constantly on hand at the Excelsior Bakery, Acton.

The Sabbath School at Crewson's Corners has closed for the winter season.

Mr. Bennett, of Halton, intends starting a large hog breeding establishment near Winnipeg.

Dr. M. Forster has disposed of his drug store business to Mr. J.E. McGarvin, and is about to remove to Palmerston.

Messrs. W.H. Storey and James Moore left on Monday for Gloversville, N.Y. on a business trip.

Coles' slaw

Homes are demolished but memories linger

When wreckers demolished two houses on Church St. recently to make way for a new downtown parking lot they unwittingly took a reminder of a lot of Acton history down with them. Several people mentioned it to me, among them solicitor Ron Henry, who noted the house at the corner of Church and Willow was the home of one of the best hockey players who ever donned the livery of the Acton Tanners and a well known character around Acton for decades.

The other home, although most people are probably not aware, was once a bakery where they produced bread that made today's products look and taste starchy.

According to Acton's Early Days, the latter home was built early in Acton's history and was the residence of a Mirimachi, New Brunswick, George Walters, before the Stathams moved in and established a bakery. They lived there for over a quarter of a century.

Mr. Statham was a veteran of the American Civil War and his bakery was later taken over by his daughter, Mrs. George Edwards and later again by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur MacDonald. It was a familiar sight when I was a

boy to see the bakery rig delivering bread and pastries to homes pulled by a willing horse who caught some shut-eye at every stop. Vic Alger was a popular driver. Just about everything was delivered by horse and cart in those days including milk, ice, groceries and coal for the stove or furnace.

In winter when the carts switched to sleighs it was a Saturday afternoon thrill to ride the "bobs" behind Casey Jones' team of white horses from the coal yards at the station or Mackenzie Lumber.

Casey Jones lived with his family and team in a cottage at the corner of Church and Elgin Streets. There was a barn on the property for the horses, now occupied by The Bell Telephone building.

We got covered with coal dust sometimes on those free lifts on the coal wagon and had to face the wrath of mothers when we arrived home. There was also another by-product from those rides—hockey pucks. The snow covered roads where the horses dumped their "horse buns". From then, they provided the pucks most of us could ill-afford for road hockey, which as today was a favorite sport.



"Dang" Kentner as seen by cartoonist J. K. Gardiner in the pages of The Free Press in 1939.

But I'm wandering. The other house, where the Kentner family lived for years, was on the corner of Church and Willow and the home of Jack "Dang"

Kentner, whose hockey exploits are still discussed in sports circles. The Kentner family moved to Acton from Milton primarily to play hockey. There were several boys including Joe, Fred, Jack and Clarence, all of whom wore the livery of the Tanners when they were the scourge of the Ontario Hockey Association's Intermediate B series.

They were all good players but "Dang" with his size, stickhandling ability and robust constitution was picked by professional scouts as a potential star. Fresh from the rinks of Milton he was first spotted by the semi-professional Western Ontario League where he lined up with the Windsor club the first year and also played with other teams in the league.

My informant says he was ticketed for the NHL and despatched to play for the Quebec Aces which were part of the Montreal Maroon farm system. "Dang" made the journey to Quebec City and in the warm-ups got so frustrated because just about everyone spoke French that he packed his bags and went home.

When the closed arena was first opened in December of 1929, on natural ice Jack Kentner was still with the pros. He came back to Acton but it was 1933

before he was allowed to play amateur hockey again. He played for the Tanners for five years until the club won the championship in 1939, beating Woodstock Red Devils in the finals.

When World War 2 broke out the village closed the old Acton arena and used it for a wool warehouse. Hockey died in Acton until after the shooting. And Jack Kentner came back to play during the playoffs. He was a familiar sight on defence, his jaws chomping gum, a red baseball hat on one side of his head and his head turned to one side. He was so slick with the puck it looked like it was tied to his stick.

My memories go back to the playoff series in the 40s when "Dang" rejoined the team and teamed up with Ilio Marzo and the late "Dude" Lindsay in a playoff game against the defending champion Preston club. I was in the press box for that game, played in the new Waterloo arena, where they had artificial ice. There also with the usual collection of scribes was a sports writer from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record.

Asked why he was there he replied, "To see Jack Kentner play." He said he hadn't seen Kentner play since his pro days but the stories about his ability on

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