

The Acton Free Press

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Good news!

The best news we have heard in weeks—the old town hall might be saved. Rejoice.

Some eloquent pleas on its behalf were heard at the hearing last Wednesday and they made one thing clear—the building is worthwhile saving, not because it might be useful, not because it is in good shape but because it is a page out of Acton's past.

Sometimes we have to hear these words from someone else to grasp their significance. That old red brick building is part of the social fabric of the community. Destroy it and we become iconoclasts. Save it and we let generations to come know we cherished the best things out of the past.

But the old town hall is not only history it is a typical example of 19th century architecture. Fundamentally it is in fair shape. We've let some features of the building be destroyed but there are still enough left to make it a fine part of our heritage.

The big surprise was the \$134,000 the federal government agreed to give as a make

work grant for the save the town hall project. Apparently it took only seven days for it to come through. The irony is that the town has been fiddling around for seven years and then decided to demolish.

Council decided to lift the historic designation they gave the building and that's what the hearing is all about. Intentions were to replace the old town hall with a parking lot. The Town's arguments fell flat at hearing of the Conservation Review Board because they were based on utility, not on historical significance.

It is time for council to retract their views and get with it—the old town hall should be saved.

It took the determined efforts of a small band of zealots to remind us that there are other things more important than dollars and cents. They should be the toast of the town persevering in spite of the cynicism and contrariness of the rest of us.

Let's get behind them and save our roots.

Out of step

Obviously the \$710,000 council has in the reserve fund for a municipal complex is burning a hole in their collective pockets—so much they want to ladle out \$650,000 for an overpriced (for the town) 30 acre site in Georgetown.

There's some merit in the move—interest rates are not as high as they were. The invested money is not making as much as it did. On the other hand taxpayers surely realize there is a lot more suitable land in Halton Hills at a much cheaper price.

It is obvious what the mayor and council, are attempting. They want to tie in the municipality with a Georgetown hospital complex and also make the area headquarters for Halton Hills hydro activities. They want to centralize everything in one place to provide the Town a showpiece, or an empire, whatever you want to call it.

If the Town really needed a new complex, of course, the first thing they should have done is to prove the need. In view of the fact Halton Hills is made up of three distinct communities we think the present method of decentralization makes more sense than one fancy headquarters. With communications as slick as they are today it is ridiculous to suggest the municipality could operate much more efficiently if all offices were in one place.

In Acton's case you can bet

the sub-offices which the municipality operates here would soon be closed and taxpayers would have no option but to make the trip to Georgetown to pay bills or send them by mail. It would be argued of course, that the building is for all of Halton Hills. But Acton and area would get the crumbs again.

We suggest the Town should be thinking of a more modest proposal than a 30 acre site. Why not a few acres situated at Silvercreek? Better still how about upgrading the facilities at the present site on Trafalgar Road? Why not place a modest headquarters somewhere along 7 Highway between Georgetown and Acton where the bulk of the Town's population would have access? In this day of sophisticated rural waste disposal it is not necessary for a sewer hook-up.

These are all questions that should be answered before council goes ahead with the proposal they have now endorsed.

At a time when both the federal and provincial governments have decided that decentralization of government should take place by moving offices and departments around, Halton Hills is moving to do just the opposite—centralizing the Town from a showpiece in Georgetown.

No wonder some people are annoyed.

Crackdown on vandals

The problems encountered in downtown Acton by merchants and the public with vandalism and unruly street loungers may be at an end.

Mayor Peter Pomeroy, in his inaugural address to council, has pledged a crackdown on hoodlums and vandalism in Acton. As a new member of the Halton Police Commission he said he intended to make downtown Acton a safe place to walk and shop 24 hours a day.

Last week in court Judge Douglas Latimer made similar statements to a young offender who was convicted of an offence downtown.

"Pass the word to your

friends," he stated, that the court is going to act on problems in Acton.

Now the problems have been officially recognized at both the police and magistrate levels it could do much to clear up the image the downtown was getting from residents and visitors who couldn't help noting the numbers and appearance of loiterers.

Their presence only did more to compound the problems merchants faced with a recession and the empty and boarded-up stores.

Hopefully the downtown will regain the friendly look it needs and wants as an attractive shopping centre.



—Coles' slaw

Fairy Lake has provided fun

Last week I rambled on about Fairy Lake and the remarkable Mrs. Secord and her enterprises including the naming of Fairy Lake which she also spearheaded. The information came from Acton's Early Days which incidentally is also available at the book store in town.

The column brought several responses including one from Fred Allan who wondered whether the name Fairy Lake should not have been "Fair Lake." He says he has a turn-of-the-century photograph of the lake and it is named Fair Lake. He thinks the name would match the description Mrs. Secord recorded of an expanse of clear crystal spring water with wooded hills around it, cultivated fields and attractive homes.

Was it a typographical error or have we been calling the lake by the wrong name for almost a century? Anyone know?

In any case if you have been following the Back Issues column of 10, 20, 50, 75 and 100 years ago you may have noticed sleighs were running and there was skating on the lake and Henderson's Pond, which once was behind the Free Press building on Willow Street. There were some great shiny games on that pond when I was growing up as well as on Fairy Lake.

It wasn't uncommon to have 50 or 60 men and boys engaged in a game of shiny which is really hockey without boards, pads and any gear except skates and stick. Goal posts usually consisted of two sticks or rocks placed at a width which suited the goalie. He was usually the kid who couldn't skate too well or had ambitions to replace Turk Broda in the nets of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The score was kept in the heads of the different teams. If the game ever ended no one really knew what the score was but most were willing to argue about it. Needless to say there were few injuries on the pond. Because there were few physical limitations most of the players learned to skate like the wind.

Beardmore nifty beds were another important filter for future hockey players. Those who ventured onto the ice too early when it was unsafe experienced a dip into the red colored liquid. Rather than face the wrath at

home they would dry off at the side of fires which always were lit beside the beds or the ponds. They served as a warming spot for cold feet and also as a place to change from shoes to skates or vice versa.

When the ice was smooth and safe and with little snow on it there would be hundreds of people skating on Fairy Lake on a Sunday afternoon. The exercise wasn't limited to the young. Ages on the blades would range from five to 70 and perhaps some even older than that. That, of course, was in the days when the ice in the arena was natural, and was usually finished by the middle of March. Any ice time before or after then was a bonus.

The ice on Fairy Lake also used to serve another purpose—filling ice boxes which were the predecessor of the modern electric refrigerator. Blocks of ice were cut and hauled by teams of horses to ice houses. There they were packed in sawdust until the hot summer months. Then the ice man made his rounds and sold it by blocks according to weight. I think, and it kept the perishable foods of the day cool.

I remember the grief in Acton when a team of horses owned by the late Bob Wallace, went through the ice and drowned, while they were hauling blocks. People sent down to the lake and looked at the spot the horses went through and just shook their heads. It was rumored they never recovered the bodies of the team and they were laid to rest in the deep waters of Fairy Lake.

The next summer if there was an outbreak of disease parents invariably blamed the waters of Fairy Lake for the infection. Children were forbidden to swim until the scare subsided. Sometimes even the medical officer of health of the time posted signs forbidding us to swim at the beach during an epidemic.

It stopped most of the swimming but there were always a few who swam up at the "Big Bridge". They disregarded the dictum and swam away to their heart's content with little visible effect. The "Big Bridge", of course, was the railway trestle that crossed Fairy Lake to the Breezes and carried the electric cars of the Toronto Suburban Railway from Toronto to Guelph when it was demolished they left the piles standing.

They made excellent diving platforms into the herds of snapping turtles which inhabited that part of the lake.

Since most of the lads who swam there were nothing or very little they were sometimes victims of the turtles which bit at the intruders. The injuries were often embarrassing.

Fairy Lake has always been a good fishing spot, too, but the varieties of piscatorial splendor which inhabit the waters had changed over the years by dint of stocking programs and the affinity of coarse fish for the warm water before the lake was in 1867.

At one time there were trout in the lake along with catfish bass and, of course, the suckers, which plugged the lake's tributaries, such as the school creek, in the spawning season. As the lake filled with silt and weeds it choked off the springs. The trout and bass became less abundant and the suckers, and catfish thrived.

Someone got the bright idea at one stage that the inclusion of northern pike in the lake would reduce the numbers of coarse fish and keep the weeds down at the same time. So a result the Department of Games and Fisheries introduced some large pike into the lake. They thrived for a few years and there were some happy anglers with three and four foot long trophies to lug home. But over the years the size of the lake has stunted the growth of the pike. We hear less and less about mammoth catches although there have been some good size bass caught in the last few years.

This doesn't nearly begin to tell the story of Fairy Lake or Fair Lake. There have been many tragedies in the lake's waters and they have provided good times for thousands of people over the last century and a half since the founders of Acton, the Adams brothers, dammed the sparkling stream up and flooded the 88 acres of farmland and bush.

The Adams dammed the creek to provide power for their flour mill and it is noteworthy that a flour mill still stands on that spot run by the Zeiglers. They use other motive power not to operate the mill but the dam is still there and provides water for the Beardmore plant down the Black Creek via a pipe line.

From The Canadian Champion (Milton)

What activities are considered acceptable for the attention of a religious charity?

A dispute over that question between Renaissance Canada and the federal Ministry of Revenue was resolved recently by the Federal Court of Appeal—at least partially.

At issue were the efforts Rev. Ken Campbell's Milton-based organization devoted to ensuring the defeat of a homosexual aldermanic candidate in the 1980 municipal elections.

The candidate said the campaign was a question of politics, while Rev. Campbell said he was acting to defend the values of faith and family in local government.

In an arbitrary decision, federal bureaucrats stripped Renaissance of its tax exempt status, but did not give officials of the organization a

What others say:

Ken wins

chance to respond to the charges against them or to present arguments supporting their actions.

On that basis alone, the federal judges agreed, the revocation of Renaissance's tax status should be overturned, because there had been a denial of "natural justice" by a government bureaucracy.

Whether one favors the idea of sexual deviants seeking public office or not, it seems clear that organizations like Renaissance have a legitimate role to play in questions of modern life and government.

There was a time when the majority of society accepted a fairly narrow definition of what was right and wrong, moral and immoral, but

those clear, comforting lines have become confused in a process of social change.

Groups who once dared not speak their names now trumpet their perversions and desires at every opportunity—leaving confusion and despair in their wake.

Organizations such as Renaissance provide, for some, an anchor in this modern whirlpool—clear definitions, choices and alternatives.

Questions of morality, today, are unfortunately also questions of politics. It seems impossible to separate the two and for that reason alone it seems questionable to say a religious organization does not have a role in the political process.

It is unfortunate that the court focused its attention on questions of procedure rather than the merits of the action taken by the government, but the results were right.

Back issues

10 years ago

December 13, 1972

Again this Christmas principal G. W. McKenzie and Mrs. McKenzie entertained the Robert Little staff at a dinner party.

Mrs. R. M. MacDonald, who died on the weekend, was Acton's oldest lifelong resident. She had lived in town for the past 92 years.

Jim Ismond was elected president of the Acton Minor Baseball Association for the 1973 season at the groups annual meeting at Acton Centennial Library on Sunday.

Specials this week at Lovell Bros. Meat Market are: Prime rib roasts \$1.49 a lb., small link sausage 69c a lb., lean shoulder roasts 85c a lb. and side bacon 99c a lb.

A 25 year pin was presented to Ann Mowat during the Christmas meeting of the Duke of Devonshire chapter of the IOOE.

Veteran Erin Councillor Harold Griffin was honored Saturday evening at the reeve's dinner with a presentation of a plaque in recognition of 20 years of faithful service to Erin township council.

20 years ago

December 13, 1962

This Saturday afternoon at 2.15 p.m. there will be a ceremony of the laying of the corner stone at the new Christian Reformed Church.

Mr. and Mrs. T. H. Newton, RR 4 Acton, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary Sunday afternoon during a reception at the home of their son Sydney Newton.

Miss Emma Balduc quietly celebrated her 85th birthday on Saturday. Several friends and neighbours called to offer good wishes and congratulations.

Beardmore office ladies enjoyed a turkey dinner in the YMCA, Tuesday, catered by the Y Ladies' Auxiliary.

50 years ago

December 8, 1932

Bob Kerr and son, Acton won reserve champion with "Sonny Boy" in the hackney stallion class at the Guelph Winter Fair this week.

A shooting match will be held at Brookville on Saturday, December 10, for geese, ducks and chickens starting at 1 p.m. sharp.

A chimney fire at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Young, on Church Street, gave the Fire Brigade a run on Wednesday of last week.

Playing this week at the Gregory Theatre is on Friday, "The Purchase Price" starring Barbara Stanwyck, on Saturday night, "The War Correspondent" starring Jack Holt and Ralph Graves.

Specials this week at Patterson's Meat Shop are: side bacon 14c a lb., fresh ham 10c a lb., 2 lbs. of homemade sausage for 20c and choice rib roasts 14c a lb.

75 years ago

December 12, 1907

Mr. Wm. Hemstreet, auctioneer, has sold his farm, 65 acres, fronting on Main Street, to this nephew, Mr. Alfred Hemstreet, of Trafalgar, for \$5,000.

On Monday night a checker match was played between players residing on the north and south sides of Mill Street. An early victory was scored by the north 2014. The players were: North—John Harvey, C.T. Hill, D. Henderson, Leslie Moore and A.B. Wright. South—James Matthews, L. Lambert, W. Mullin, E.A. Slater and Edw. Dynes.

Messrs. W.H. Storey and Son continue to run over time. There is no business depression there evidently.

Adam Cook announces a clearing auction sale of stock and implements, on Saturday, December 21 at one o'clock.

G.A. Black is advertising for 50 men to cut cordwood at \$1.10 per cord.

100 years ago

December 21, 1882

We understand that Reeve Smith does not intend to be a candidate at this election, but Messrs. W.H. Storey and D.D. Christie are named by their respective friends.

Mr. J.E. McGarvin, druggist and stationer, has our thanks for a copy of that most useful volume, The Canadian Almanac for 1883.

The post office will be open on Christmas day from 8 to 10 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m.

Wren's Georgia Minstrels visited Acton on Friday night. Their show was pronounced a fraud.

Remember the Christmas Tree and Sabbath School entertainment in the Methodist Church this evening.

In the year just closing the Acton Free Press have added to their office, new machinery, type and printing appliances to the amount of nearly one thousand dollars.