

The Acton Free Press

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Need many more costs for complex

The Town and Hydro space needs study has answered a lot of questions, but it's unenviable and the future of this issue also raises many more questions.

What councillors have long suspected has now been confirmed by an outside authority, the Town has been operating with far, far less space than it needs. Halton Hills Hydro has been too, though not for nearly as long because it was born later than Halton Hills.

No question more space is needed for the various departments. Also, no question a municipal operation mostly under one roof would be more efficient.

Another consideration has to be staff morale and the public image of the municipality. A municipal complex would likely make staff more willing to stay working for Halton Hills and would be an asset in terms of recruitment. A municipal complex would give the Town a more professional image in dealing with outsiders, as well as a greater identity and appearance of permanence and direction.

But all this must be weighed against costs.

The consultant estimated there was \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year wasted in staff inefficiency because of the scattered municipal operation.

However, before a municipal complex can be sold to the public much more cost savings advantages of a consolidated operation must be produced.

We need to know which municipal and Hydro properties will be sold and what price they will realistically (not appraised value but market value) fetch. How much money will the sale or rental of surplus property bring down the cost of the new building, land and maintenance?

We need a comparison of maintenance and rental costs for current Town and Hydro facilities with the yearly cost of running a new building. This examination

should look in detail at costs associated with running a new building versus old buildings in terms of utility costs.

Another question to be probed is if there will be any saving of mileage and car allowance costs with most staff under one roof.

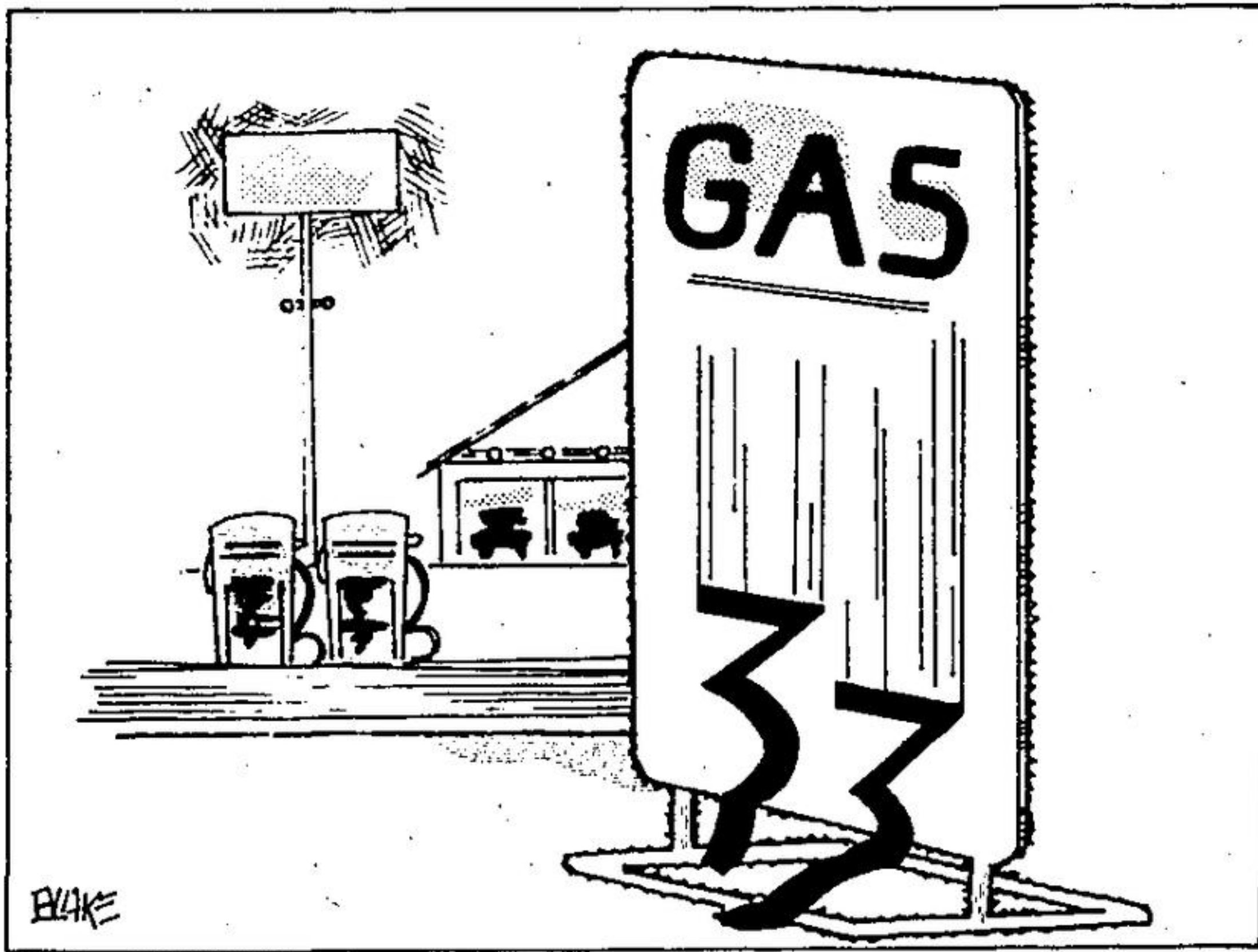
The Town and Hydro must compare 1983 or 1984 cost of building a complex in a time when construction prices are pretty good (because of tough competition in the industry brought on by the recession), and government grants which are available now but might not be when the economy improves, with the cost of waiting until the taxpayers can better afford such a mammoth project and increased taxes to pay for the undertaking.

Also, council and Hydro commission will have to decide if having the optimum amount of space is absolutely necessary considering the estimated cost of a complex of \$4.4 million or can they achieve most of the results they want, such as reduced maintenance costs and improved efficiency, with something less.

The bottom line is this new report should be viewed as simply a working document or guide for the Town and Hydro, not a final decision or even definitive direction to move in.

We're pleased to see the building committee will be looking at sites, not just the Steven's Estate site in Georgetown which may be the best one available, but was tainted by the way and the time the old council took out an option to buy it.

One thing people will have to keep in mind is the joint cost to Hydro and the Town of a complex. Just because it could be a shared facility for two separate bodies doesn't mean costs can be viewed separately. Everyone must bear in mind that the same people will pay the cost for both the Hydro and Town portions of the project, the taxpayers and hydro customers.—G.M.



From the editor's desk

To print names, or not — big question

by Gord Murray
Free Press Editor
Part one

To print names of people charged with crimes or not to print names, that is the question.

It's a question I've been asked off and on by readers of both the Free Press and Georgetown Independent for almost nine years, rarely I suspect satisfying the questioner with my answer. It's also a question which invariably prompts debate in community newspapers news rooms at conferences and conventions. It was even the subject of an inconclusive Ontario Press Conference paper.

I also suspect for years to come the debate will rage on.

As simply stated as possible we only run the names of people charged if we intend to follow the case through court. That's been the policy under three owners of this paper while I've been here. And we only follow a case in court if it is very serious, carries a probable jail sentence such as murder, manslaughter, rape, use of a dangerous weapon, wounding or attempted wounding, drug trafficking or cultivation, major thefts or robberies or crimes which are particularly newsworthy or of extreme interest to the community.

Last week at the first Neighborhood Watch meeting this newspaper's policy was once again questioned by citizens. Some thought we should be running photos of people charged with crimes like burglary so they would recognize culprits when they are in their neighborhood. Others thought if names were printed the parents and presumably the children too, would be embarrassed.

Unfortunately for those who want us to carry the names of people charged with break-ins, this crime doesn't meet our court

coverage criteria. Only after break-ins have become a long running habit do offenders go behind bars. For good reason too. There are so many break-in charges there's not enough room in jail and while it can be quite upsetting to the victim, considering the whole spectrum of crime clogging our courts it is comparatively not that serious. Also there are so many break-in cases they aren't individually unique or newsworthy.

So why don't we go to court more so we could print more names?

It comes down to a simple lack of bodies to put in court covering cases. Five days a week Acton and area residents are in court facing a wide variety of charges. Daily there are Acton oriented cases coming up in the provincial courts, county courts, supreme court even in Milton, Burlington and Guelph. I'd say we'd need at least a half-dozen reporters in the courts to cover each and every case from impaired driving to murder.

If you're going to cover one break-in case you have to in all fairness cover them all. You can cover a break-in case, but it had better be pretty unique or different and you'd best be able to justify bending the policy to the accused and their family.

Also, covering a case in court is a long, drawn out, time consuming and space eating proposition. You don't just cover the verdict and sentencing.

Court coverage involves being there for remands, as many as six or seven in cases we've covered, preliminary hearings (which we legally can't even report on), reporting the evidence and comments of the police, witnesses, judge, Crown Attorney, defence counsel, and accused at the trial and sentencing.

So for one case you'll usually go

to court six to eight times and write several stories, including at least two (trial and sentencing) which result in lengthy and involved articles.

Do readers want the paper to become nothing more than a court journal on all the culprits in Acton, nothing but crime and court stories filling pages? What about the other news?

And what about having reporters on hand to cover picture assignments and news during the day while our staff is all tied up doing nothing but court coverage?

Why does court coverage have to be thorough? Isn't it sufficient to report the verdict and sentence, especially if your goal is to simply embarrass parents and their children? We could approach it that way, but that wouldn't be fair. The accused has the right to have the whole story told and evidence and comments most often determine the outcome and sentence. If you were charged wouldn't you want the whole story told?

Why do we have to be in court for all the appearances leading up to the trial? Because it's darned near impossible to keep track of a case due to the tremendous volume going through the courts if you're not there for every appearance. Court staff hasn't the time to keep the papers posted on the progress of a case, they don't really have the time to check records and advise us over the phone even of a person's next court date. Besides, it's not their job. Also, if a mistake is made and a case is settled suddenly when we aren't there it's not fair that it hasn't been reported properly if the accused's name was printed when they were charged.

But, why is it so important to follow a case when the charged person's name is printed? After all, a charge is a fact. That's true.

(Continued on page 10)



10 years ago

April 18, 1973

Acton High schoolers held a walk-a-thon to raise money for a camping trip to Northern Ontario, scheduled in July. About \$1,000 was raised, and 29 students took part in the event.

A bid to put steam back on the rails between Cheltenham and Georgetown met with a cool response from Terra Cotta residents. Ontario Rail Association representatives who want to put a steam train on the abandoned tracks were astonished to hear residents complain that the smoke from the vintage train would pollute the air.

Miss D. Simmons was elected president of Acton Women's Institute at a recent meeting. Mrs. G. Fryer is vice-president and Miss Nora Kenny second vice-president.

20 years ago

April 18, 1953

Acton Firefighters had their hands full with eight fires reported in five days this week. Firefighters took on seven grass fires and one industrial fire between Friday afternoon and Tuesday evening.

Acton Figure Skating Club ended its first season Thursday with a display for parents and friends. Andrew Dretners is skating instructor. Highlight of the show was a solo performance by Linda Braida.

The Alert Evening Auxiliary of Knox Presbyterian Church held an evening of song, dance, humorous readings and entertainment at Halton Manor recently. Performers included Carol Masales and Karen Ashley, Marilyn and Lloyd McIntyre, and several young dancers.

50 years ago

April 20, 1933

The Easter cantata given by the United Church choir was one of the finest given for some time. The organist Miss Fern Brown was assisted by Mr. D. Taylor of Toronto. Mrs. C.L. Poole, Mrs. H.A. Mowat, Messrs. G. Simpson and G. Masales, Mrs. A.K. Harrington and Mrs. Haines had solo parts.

Despite last year's deficit, it was decided to operate the lawn bowling and tennis club again this year. Beardmore and Co. have previously met the deficits. Each member was to sell five memberships. It would be a decided loss to the town if the grounds were closed as they are a beauty spot which every citizen should be proud of. (Note: the bowling greens and tennis courts were located where Canadian Tire store is now.)

75 years ago

April 18, 1908

The Easter concert of the Methodist Sunday School, for the third year under the direction of Miss Amy Doty of London, was another pronounced success. The orchestra played and over 100 took part in choruses, solos, recitations, marches, drills, callisthenics and other exercises.

There was a terrible fatal accident in the sole leather tannery, by which John Moffat was killed. The particulars of the accident are very harrowing. (They are recorded at length). An inquest was held and it was determined the hoist was insufficiently protected.

The enumeration of dogs has somewhat increased. Last year there were 86 males and three females, this year there are 81 males and 12 females. The population of the town has decreased by 24 occasioned by the temporary closing of the tanneries last fall.

100 years ago

April 28, 1883

Acton should move in the matter of fire protection. We would not favor the purchase of a fire engine, as those generally introduced into small towns are of very little service when their assistance is necessary, but a Hook and Ladder Company should be formed without delay.

Mr. R. Little, P.S. Inspector, set a commendable example by planting about 40 young maples on the streets adjoining his premises. Maples are being planted on Bower Ave. in front of the Building Association tenement houses. Our enterprising little town is becoming year by year more beautiful.

Fashionable girls have gone back to our grandmothers' days and are making patchwork quilts. The Scott Act has now been in effect a year, and business has not left the county because of the banishment of whisky.

Coles' slaw

John Root's memoirs contain a wealth of information

by Hartley Coles
Managing Editor

The man who typified rural Ontario along with colleagues like Leslie Frost and Tom Kennedy has written his memoirs. They should be in every library and school room in the country.

John Henry Haines Root, who represented Wellington-Dufferin in the Ontario Legislature for 32 years succumbed to pressures and wrote his memoirs from his rural Orton home. It was published at Star and Vidette Printing in Grand Valley and Mr. Root now 74 years of age dropped a copy in for us to peruse this week.

Mr. Root has been out of the limelight since he retired from politics in 1975 but many remember him fondly when he represented Erin and Eramosa townships in the Legislature. He was a fixture at the fall fairs and public meetings of this area, always attentive to the needs of his constituents, unflappable and very much the politician under an unassuming exterior.

His memoirs contain a wealth of information about this area and his own family but they illustrate a way of life which unfortunately has virtually vanished. It is the story of a country gentleman, using the noun in its proper sense.

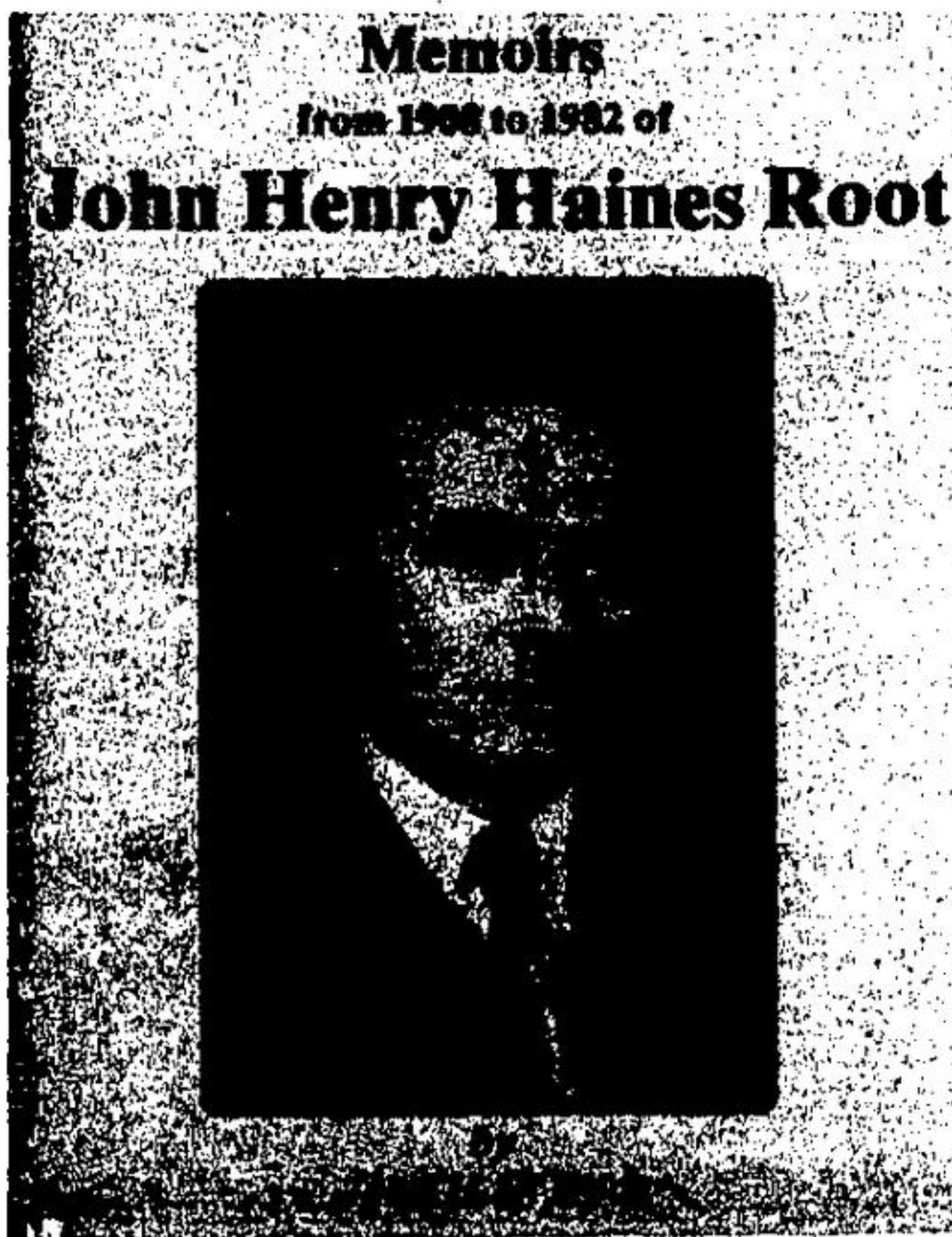
John Root is the scion of a long line of Roots who came to Canada from Buck's County in Pennsylvania when the Yankees decided they had had enough of the British.

Refugees from religious persecution in the German Palatinate and earlier in Switzerland, the Roots decided they had a better chance for freedom under British rule in Canada. They settled near Beamsville until John's great grandfather came by covered lynch wagon to Erin Township in 1825, a scant five years after Nathaniel Rosezell settled at Ballinalfad. Rosezell was the first settler in Erin Township.

John Root was raised on the family farm which still treasures many relics of the past, such as the candle mould. His grandfather used to make candles from sheep and beef tallow. There's a grindstone, a cross cut saw, a hand operated washing machine with a scrubbing board, dash and barrel churns and even the rope bed he slept on with its straw tick. The lynch pin wagon his great grandfather brought from Beamsville has been given to the Ontario Agricultural Museum near Milton.

As Mr. Root relates the farm and the church have played a prominent role in the lives of the family since the area was first settled. They also gave John Root the background which earned him the respect of the province as well as the votes of a riding which had been perennially Liberal until he took office.

And it didn't come easy. It took John Root four tries before he was elected as the M.L.A. for Wellington-Dufferin. Then he carried the



riding five times in elections. As successor Jack Johnston has retained the riding for the Tories. He may have, but I don't recall,

ever hearing John Root say a mean word about anyone in the worst of political hassles. He served in the Cabinet as well as being chairman of the Ontario Water Resources Commission, offices which were often the centre of controversy.

Although today he would be thought bland, Mr. Root introduced a number of measures in the Legislature which have vastly improved the life of the people of this province including legislation to protect our precious water resources. He recommended that a third lane be added to long grades and at intersections for slow moving vehicles on the province's two land highways. These are only two of the measures he introduced. At the same time he carried on a vigorous family and community life and has travelled widely.

A dedicated Baptist he has also given much of his career to his church and advanced to the 32nd degree in the Masonic Order. Musically the Roots are well known across the province.

The story of the Root family perhaps would not make an exciting motion picture but it is families such as theirs which have been the backbone of Ontario. Mr. Root's memoirs contain invaluable information which fortunately will not be lost now because he took the time to sit down and write his memoirs.