

# The Acton Free Press

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## Acton must fight for Section 63

Acton has a well-deserved reputation for not taking injustices lying down.

For that reason its puzzling why Acton hasn't risen up and said "enough is enough"—it's time we were treated fairly and council adopted Section 63 (formerly Section 86) to bring about property tax assessment reform.

Residents in all wards of Halton Hills who live in homes built since the early '70s are carrying a heavier tax load than others in town, since the province has had new properties assessed under market value assessment. Homes built before the early '70s have had their assessments frozen by the province. The only method of equalizing assessments and thawing frozen assessments is adoption of Section 63.

There was a relatively mild protest in favor of Section 86 a few years ago from Bovis residents. However, when council narrowly voted to maintain the inequitable status quo, Bovis gave up the fight. They didn't even follow through on mention of launching a property tax assessment-reform ratemakers' group.

Earlier this year, in a complicated presentation, a consultant hired by Heller's showed council that not only are residents of new homes in all wards being shafted because antiquated assessments are still in effect, but in fact Acton stores and industries are really being treated unfairly. Local businesses are paying about 25 per cent higher taxes than their counterparts in Georgetown.

The consultant also claimed residential taxes on similar properties in Acton and Georgetown are out-of-whack; Acton's paying about 25 per cent more than those in Georgetown. That contention is disputed by the resident expert on council, Ross Knechtel, though he says the 25 per cent disparity definitely exists for business and industry.

The implication of council's action earlier this summer, rejection of a study Knechtel and other backers of Section 63 wanted so their case for reform would be more convincing, is clear. This study wouldn't have

forced council to adopt Section 63, so the majority of councillors were saying they'd prefer to keep their heads in the sand and ignore the glaring inequities. It's politically safer, they believe.

A couple of weeks ago Knechtel presented some more evidence of, as he put it, the "royal screwing" Acton is receiving.

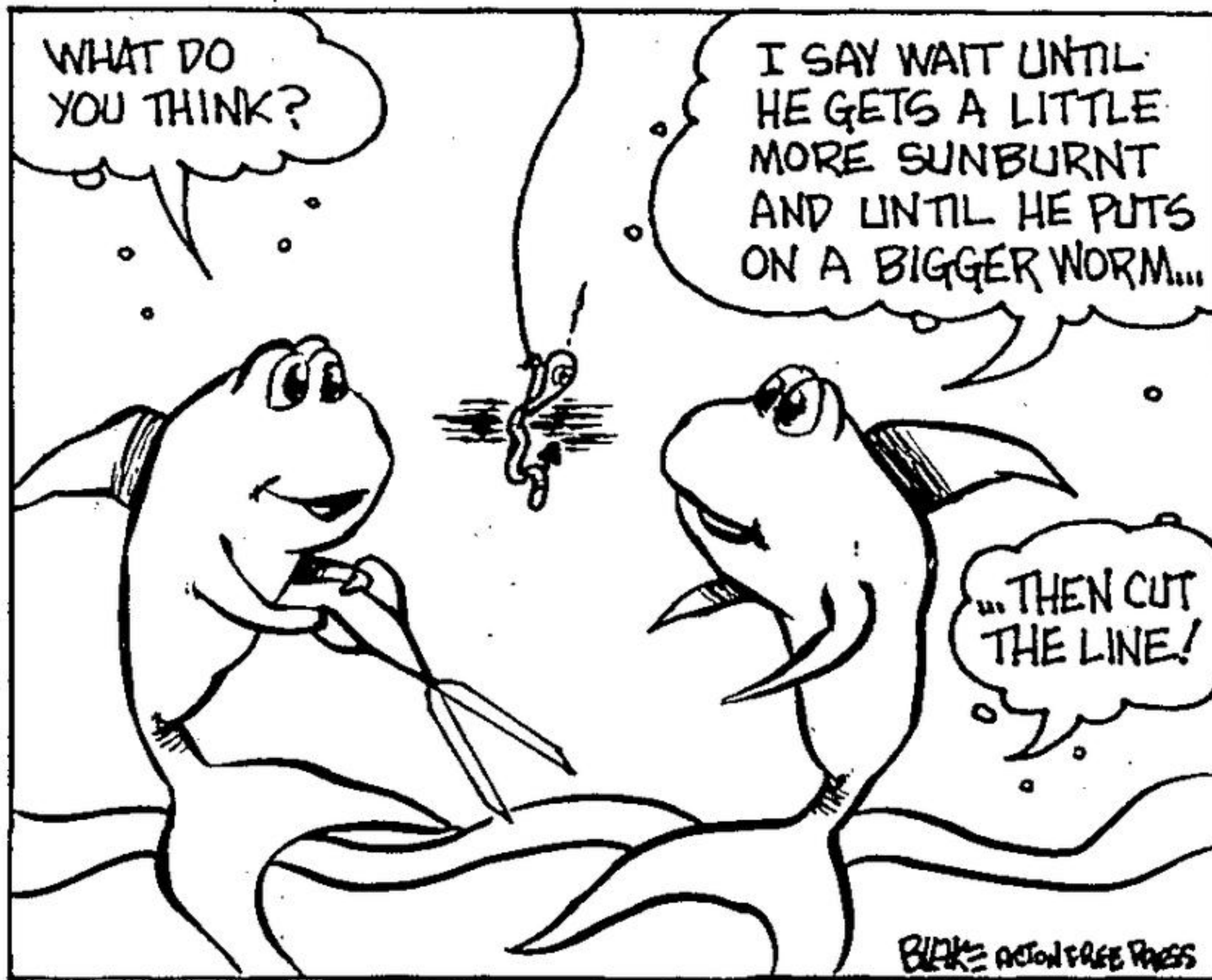
With this kind of publicity for an issue, it's puzzling why Acton hasn't been hollering. Where are the delegations, weekly if necessary, to council protesting this highly unfair and improper situation? Where are the letters to the editor? Where are the local meetings to organize protests? Where is the lobbying of Georgetown and Esquesing residents who live in newer homes and paying more than their fair share?

To be sure Actonians, especially local businessmen, have reacted to the publicity to their local representatives about this complex and complicated issue. But they are preaching to the converted. Knechtel and Dave Whiting voted for Section 86 and have said they'll support adoption of Section 63. Newcomer Rick Bonnette has offered a sympathetic ear and while he hasn't said he'll vote for Section 63 when and if it comes to a vote, he seems to be leaning in the direction of delivering a third yes vote. He certainly voted for Knechtel's study request because it would provide council with more information.

But Acton councillors need at least four votes out of Georgetown and Esquesing, and support from councillors in the other three wards is lukewarm at best, to carry the day.

The Acton councillors need strong, visible and vocal support from Acton to win this battle. Georgetown and Esquesing councillors must be convinced Acton's mad as hell and won't take this anymore. They must also hear from their own constituents who would benefit from property tax assessment reform. It must become politically safer to adopt Section 63 than maintain the status quo.

Now, what are you waiting for Acton? Go get 'em. —G.M.



## Back issues

### 10 years ago

August 22, 1973

Acton Legion has received approval from Esquesing Council to build a \$300,000 legion hall on the former Nelles property.

Bob Drinkwater has announced he will seek an area council seat in the upcoming municipal election. Building in Nassagaweya this year has already hit the \$3 million mark, township building inspector Terry Gallamore says.

Wally Coe of Alderwood scored the first hole in one at Acton Meadows this year.

### 20 years ago

August 22, 1963

Street rowdiness has prompted a debate in Acton's council chambers centred around police protection. Last Friday night and early Saturday morning, OPP arrested and charged six persons with nine offences as a result of two disturbances.

Approval has been given for a 300-bed home for the aged. Construction for the new Halton Centennial Manor in Milton will begin immediately.

The new Acton and District Community Centre is completed and in use. Construction costs of \$75,166 were raised through a fund-raising campaign and a \$10,000 grant from the Province.

### 50 years ago

August 17, 1933

The best game of the softball league so far saw Hewetson Shoes defeated by Tanners 8-4. Tanners: J. Woods, J. Waterhouse, F. Gibbons, W. Waterhouse, R. Anderson, A. Kirkness, M. Tyler, J. McGeachie, N. Morton, Shoeies, Spires, Mooney, F. Waterhouse, W. Holloway, S. Scriven, G. Masales, W. Gibbons, C. Holmes, L. Masales, A. Buchanan, T. Gibbons.

The work at the pioneer cemetery has already made a marked improvement. The wilderness is gone, it seems pretty generally felt that the structure to be built from the stones should be a pergola, similar to that in Galt. Many of the slabs are broken and lying on the ground. Subscriptions continue to come in from interested parties.

A large number attended the barn dance in Mr. Lloyd Johnston's new barn on the seventh line. Parkin's orchestra played and Mr. Clarence Lynch called off.

Threshing is now the main activity in the countryside. The yield is fair.

### 75 years ago

August 20, 1908

It is very rare to have two interments in Churchill cemetery in one week but such was the case, owing to the deaths of Mrs. John Gibbons and George Snyder.

There has been quite an exodus from this vicinity to the North-west and the harvest fields.

Several citizens have complained that the electric light system is frequently very tardy in coming on in the evenings.

One hundred and thirty five men were laid off last Friday by Acton Tanning Company with the instructions there would be no work for two weeks. The general depression has effected the leather trade seriously and buyers are extremely cautious.

The Siege of Sebastopol will be represented at the Canadian National Exhibition this year with a cast of 1,000 and the largest stretch of scenery ever placed on a stage.

### 100 years ago

August 30, 1883

Messrs. Beardmore and Co.'s big brick chimney has been completed. It is 105 feet high, contains over 40,000 bricks and cost in the neighbourhood of \$2000. It is said to be the largest and tallest chimney in the county.

The diseases most prevalent this week in Ontario: Diarrhoea, Anaemia, Neuralgia, Cholera, Infantum, Bronchitis, Cholera Morbus.

During the fall wheat harvest just over, Mr. M.B. Bennett, a man 85 years of age, cradled 17 acres of fall wheat in six days, at the farm of Mr. Peter Sayers in Nassagaweya. The above is a fact, and can be certified to.

Very heavy frost on Monday morning.

We regret to say there are a number of very bad boys and young men in Rockwood. On Sunday no less than six whips were stolen from vehicles in the Methodist Church shed, and other similar freaks are being continually committed. What is their chief constable doing?

## From the editor's desk

While the cat's away the mice will play. Helen's away on vacation in Collingwood. I'm not doing a lot of playing of any kind. I'm doing a lot of the stuff she usually does, as well as my own work, so darn it all there's not a lot of time left over. But, I'm going to have a little fun never-the-less.

Earlier this year she gave me a shot in her column. I can't recall the specifics and it's not worth looking up. Suffice to say she implied I can be a little thick between the ears from time to time, (some will tell you earnestly that it's a permanent state of affairs with me, but don't believe everything you hear).

Anyway, after that little shot, a good number of people who read both of our columns regularly mentioned they'd be waiting for me to fire a shot back. They've been waiting and waiting.

Those who know us well are aware neither of us is inclined to hold back digs at each other, so they've been expecting a good broadside from me.

Some of you, I must say, must really enjoy witnessing Murray domestic disputes (not the type the police are called for, at least so far, though she has thrown a few steak knives at me over the dinner table, but that's another story). You seem so eager for a reply.

Well, what follows isn't really a reply to her comment about my intelligence level, but it is a couple of stories I've long wanted to share with all who would read or listen.

However, in the interest of relative peace in the newsroom, I haven't written them previously.

I admit it, I'm taking advantage of her absence.

So, here goes. Digs from my corner.

It's 10 years ago next month that I met Helen. I had just transferred to Sheridan College in Oakville from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto so I could learn the skills necessary to work on a small town paper.

Anyway, I didn't notice Helen again for a few days. Then one day she was sitting at the next table. I concluded she must just be short (which she obviously is), but belonged in the school. She was being quiet (for a change).

## First meeting the "little Heller"



by Gord Murray  
Free Press editor

I was really looking forward to Sheridan. I felt I'd made a wise choice.

For a time though, Helen had me thinking I'd made the wrong choice.

My first day there I sort of met Helen.

Having some training in journalism, I was assigned to work with the second year students on the first issue of the school weekly, the Sheridan Sun.

My first day at this new school I went straight to the Sun's newsroom, received an assignment and buckled down to work.

It wasn't easy. There was a big distraction in a small package.

You see, there was this little girl sitting in there talking a mile a minute. And I mean a mile a minute. If you think Helen talks fast and long now, just take my word for it, she's mellowed greatly.

This non-stop chatter went on and on. Finally, I turned and looked at the source more carefully.

It wasn't love at first sight. You see she was sitting there jawing away swinging her legs, she couldn't touch the floor. (Still can't in a lot of chairs).

"What kind of place is this?" I asked myself. "They let the students bring their younger siblings to class." I thought, from my view across the room, she was about 13 or 14.

Anyway, I didn't notice Helen again for a few days. Then one day she was sitting at the next table. I concluded she must just be short (which she obviously is), but belonged in the school. She was being quiet (for a change).

We were both working on our assignments, when that wee voice piped up and asked if I knew how to spell some word.

In my usual charming way, trying really hard to impress her, I growled "How the (expletive deleted) would I know? Look it up!"

Great first impression eh! Anyway, despite my initial impression of her (I expect next time I'm away she'll tell you about her first impression of me), we got to know each other and followed the same courtship route as most couples. The rest, as they say, is history.

So, with this tale of the little woman (in this case that's not a sexist or chauvinist remark, she's female and little) off my chest, I'll now wait for my punishment.

Helen's parents get the paper weekly, so if Canada Post suddenly becomes speedy and she gets it before returning on the weekend there may or may not be an On the Leavell in the next week's edition and the Free Press may or may not have an opening for a reporter. I might also be looking for a roommate or smaller quarters, who knows how little Helen (or "The Little Heller" as my best friend from childhood calls her) will react?

But just to be on the safe side, I miss you "Stugs" and can't wait 'til you get back home... and back to work too.

P.S. Try and be as good a sport about what I wrote as Irma appeared to be about Hartley's column last week, dear.

## Coles' slaw Mill-Main corner has a colorful history

by Hartley Coles  
Managing Editor

When Bill Yundt makes up his mind to do something he doesn't waste any time. It hardly seems yesterday when the old store which housed his pharmacy and apartments came down before construction on the spanking new building started. The foundation is already laid and it shouldn't be long before a new store helps make the downtown business section more attractive.

The old building which went under the wrecker's hammer has a lively history. Dave Dills and I tried to trace the many businesses which occupied the premises during a recent conversation. It was Dave who revealed it had also been the site of Clark's Hotel, back even before he was a boy.

My memory of that corner only goes back to when it was occupied by the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Acton Cremery but I also remember when it was home for the Bell Telephone exchange, Sid Eisen's Clothing Store and Simpson's Order Office before Bill Yundt bought it for his pharmacy. I don't recall any other businesses in

there but there well could have been.

Acton's Early Days, the book Halton Hills Libraries are making an index for now, tells of the early days of that corner, when it was occupied by a stone hotel, which the book says was "well remembered."

Erection of this hotel was commenced by the late Simeon Anderson but he died before it was completed. He had previously kept hotel in a log building supplanted over a century ago by the Dominion Hotel, built by Robert Agnew which stood on the north side of the IGA grocery store. There's only a parking lot there now since the hotel's destruction in a tragic fire.

After Mr. Anderson's death his executors, the late Dr. N. McCarvin and well known builder James Cameron had the stone hotel completed on the corner of Mill and Main. The first landlord of the new hotel, according to Acton's Early Days, was John Wallace who afterwards went to Milton and kept the Wallace House, where the Mil-

ton Inn once stood. It, too, has succumbed to the ravages of fire.

The new stone building was called the Stone Hotel and it had several landlords before it, too, was destroyed by fire about the turn of the century. Acton's Early Days notes it was somewhat remarkable that nearly all parts of the building were gutted and the contents destroyed but the barroom in the north-east corner remained almost intact until the fire was over.

The contents of the barroom suffered after the flames had been subdued, the book comments sardonically.

In those early days farmers from Esquesing, Nassagaweya, Erin and Eramosa townships used to come in to hoist a few drinks in Clark's Hotel" before they headed back along bumpy corduroy roads to their land. It is related that one wintry night, about a century ago, a resident of Nassagaweya left the premises after carousing with a few cronies most of the day. He took along a jug of whisky for company, got into his sleigh and

headed the mare home.

Somehow he got back to his Nassagaweya farm, aided no doubt by the instincts of the horse, but climbed out of the sleigh with the jug and proceeded to his line fence. He evidently tried to climb the fence but his coordination was no doubt affected because he was unable to get over.

They found him there later, the book relates, covered with snow, the jug beside him. But he was stiff in death, a lesson not lost on the book's authors.

The Stone Hotel had many landlords including Thomas Clark, Elias Clark, Thomas Campbell, James Campbell, E.C. Clark, A. Roach and A. Bihgar. It is the second last landlord named who is best remembered. He was the father of the famous author, Mazo de la Roche.

Anyway, some older residents still recall the Misses Roche driving around Acton with a two wheeled cart behind a Shetland pony. She later wrote her way to fame with the novel, Jalna.

After the Stone Hotel burned

down Neil Patterson purchased the property and built the block of stores and apartments which have now been demolished to make way for a new home for Acton Pharmacy.

On the adjoining lot where Acton IGA and Acton Bowling Alleys now are situated the late Dr. Cox built a brick garage which was known as the Central Garage on the site of Acton's first grocery store conducted by Miller Hemstreet and called The Danville Grocery. (Acton was Danville then). It is ironic the lot is now occupied by another leading grocery supermarket.

According to Acton's Early Days, Acton's skating rink was also located on this lot. It was known as the King Edward Rink and was flooded by using the fire engine to pump the water from the town hall well before there were any waterworks in Acton.

So that piece of real estate has had a colorful history before it starts new beginnings in the 1980s.