

# Historical Society acquires Clarke collection



MRS. GWENDOLINE P. CLARKE

by Mark Rowe

"Halton's Pages of the Past" is a book of local history which many historians use frequently as a starting point for research. This 191 page book was published in 1955 by Dills Printing for Mrs. Gwendoline P. Clarke. The Esqueving Historical Society acquired the private collection of Gwen Clarke's writings last month.

Gwen Clarke may be remembered by long-time readers of The Acton Free Press. She was the author of the "Chronicles of Ginger Farm" which she wrote weekly from 1923 until 1962—without missing a single week! The Chronicles tell of life on an Ontario farm.

Her farm was the last one on the left hand side of Martin Street (Highway 25) in Milton. This Esqueving farm was incorporated within Milton three decades ago and is now the site of the provincial detention centre.

Mrs. Clarke was an amateur writer married to a farmer. They had two

children. Gwen, born in England, immediately loved life in Canada and our history. She founded the Scotch Block Women's Institute in 1933 and was a Halton County Council reporter for many years.

Gwen Clarke was featured in the April 14, 1949 issue of The Acton Free Press after having completed twenty years as a writer with that paper. The early days were recounted by editor G.A. Dills. "Perhaps we should tell readers that it was only after several articles that the Ginger Farm idea evolved. Perhaps we should tell you too that in those days Mrs. Clarke and the editor were both lacking motor cars. She came to our home in Acton via the milk truck to talk over the column and get the feature underway."

The chatty weekly columns read rather like a diary as she discussed daily events which affected the lives of her family and neighbours. Topics ranged from Hitler's war to the controversy about margarine! However, first and foremost she reported

news from a farm perspective and hardly a column went by without a report on the chickens, dog, cat or primarily the cows and their calves.

Gwen Clarke did not limit herself to one column in The Free Press. Her columns were later published in "The Toronto Record". But she also wrote many articles on a variety of topics. Titles include, "On How to Paper a Room, Old Man Crozier, It Takes a Woman," and "Land of the Tall Pines." Her articles appeared in other journals including Farmers Magazine, Family Herald, Oakville Record, Canadian Countryman, and the Weekly Star. Her articles for "Halton's Pages of the Past" appeared in The Canadian Champion, Milton.

Over the years the author diligently pasted her columns in scrapbooks. She also kept copies of all her manuscripts, published or not. It was this large collection that her daughter, Dorothy Walsh, decided to loan to the Historical Society.

After her mother's death in 1963 she had kept the papers in a tin chest. However, she realized that the talent of her mother should be exposed, so today's citizens could read about the "simple" farm life in North Halton 50 years ago.

The collection will be housed in the society's archives located in the Georgetown Library. As Gwen Clarke said in the closing chapter of "Halton's Pages of the Past", "We like to think it brought a little pleasure to those who take pride in remembering the indomitable spirit of their forbearers; we hope, too, fresh interest has been aroused in those who, hitherto, may have been little concerned with local history."

Thank you Gwen.

The Esqueving Historical Society will meet tonight (Wednesday, March 14) at Knox Presbyterian Church, Georgetown, at 7.30. Everyone is welcome to attend and enjoy our history.

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# newsmakers

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## Study says no to dump here

Six candidate sites have been proposed as possible locations for Halton Region's planned landfill site and none are in Halton Hills.

Three of the proposed sites are in Oakville, two are in Milton and one is in Burlington.

A consultant's report released last week recommended that regional council no longer consider 11 individual areas and one quarry in the town that had been previously studied as possible locations for the garbage dump that should be in operation by 1988.

According to a report prepared by Walker Wright Young Associates Limited, the Halton Hills areas were unsuitable as landfill sites for a variety of reasons including likely traffic and environmental hazards, disruption of the agricultural community and conflict with existing and proposed land uses.

The study also found that the Halton Hills sites would be very costly to operate, and some were too small to be used as a single dump with a 8.7 million cubic yard capacity. The study recommends the region choose a single site over a multi-site option because it will be less expensive to operate over a 20 year lifespan.

The study team narrowed the field to six from 55 areas throughout the region which had been identified in a September report as suitable for more detailed study.

Each was examined to see what effect a landfill operation would have on health and public safety, the natural, social and cultural environment as well as costs and engineering factors.

The six which have been isolated from the rest will have the least impact on these factors, the study said.

The candidate sites include 700 acres north of Britannia Rd. and west of Tremaine Rd. in Milton; 460 acres south of Britannia Rd. and east of the First Line in Milton; 655 acres in the north east quadrant of the intersection of Trafalgar and Burnhamthorpe roads in Oakville, 405 acres in the southwest quadrant and 785 acres in the southeast quadrant; at the National Sewer Pipe quarry and adjacent property in Burlington, north of Hwy 403.

The study must now be presented at a public forum and approved by regional council before the consultants can give the six sites further study and pick the final site.

Under the terms of the landfill study work program, regional council expects to select a site sometime this summer with the findings submitted to the province for Environmental Assessment approval in September.

More than \$359,000 has been spent on the consultant's study since it began in September 1982 and the final bill is expected to reach \$500,000.

### Committee of Adjustment

## Sheldon challenges closed door sessions

Councillor Pam Sheldon levelled sharp criticism at the Committee of Adjustment's method of operation this week.

She charged the Committee holds all its discussion behind closed doors and comes out in public only to announce its decision.

She has made similar comments in the past, but this time, Halton Hills council decided to ask the Committee of Adjustment for an explanation for their procedure.

Sheldon contended it is not a proper way to conduct public business, and pointed out councils and Halton Land Division Committee hold all their discussion in public where they are open to scrutiny. "The public has no way of knowing how their decisions are reached."

Councillor Mike Armstrong said he understood the reasons are given with the decision, but admitted he was puzzled at the procedure.

Mayor Russ Miller explained the Committee have the right to conduct their meetings any way they wish, and cannot be directed by council.

Clerk Administrator Ken Richardson, who has spoken to the secretary, said the committee limit the discussion to just the evidence in front of them and do not entertain any other evidence. "They feel that's the way they want to conduct their meetings."

### Region

## Bomb threat no sweat

An irate caller shook everyone up at the Regional Administration building, Thursday morning, when he called in a bomb threat.

But he was probably disappointed with the result. After Regional Chairman Pete Pomeroy put the Bronte Rd. building's emergency procedures into gear, it was found to be a hoax.

The initial bomb threat was made to a switchboard operator at about 10 a.m. and a total of six calls were made that morning. Police were called and an internal check of the building was started. Persons working near the building's entrances were canvassed about visitors and departments were checked for parcel deliveries.

But nothing out of the ordinary was discovered, explained Pomeroy. Two parcels were delivered but they were found to be authentic deliveries.

"Based on our information we decided it wasn't necessary to evacuate the building," said Pomeroy.

A Halton Regional Police spokesman said confidently, "Most people in the building didn't even know a search had been made."

Pomeroy said a caller had phoned one of the region's departments with a complaint prior to the bomb threat and a telephone receptionist believed the same caller was involved.

A tape recording was made of some of the calls but police do not have a suspect.

### Jobs offered

Over 9,200 jobs will be available to Ontario young people through the Summer Experience '84 Program.

The Summer Experience Program is sponsored by the Secretariat for Social Development and administered through the Ontario Youth Secretariat. Opportunities exist for participants to work at the minimum wage in a wide variety of positions through 23 provincial ministries and various community organizations.

Guidebooks containing brief descriptions of all the positions and employers' addresses are available from secondary schools, college and university placement centres, Canada Employment Centres, and the Ontario Youth Secretariat, 700 Bay Street, 2nd Floor, Toronto, M5G 1Z6.

### Request names

Halton Hills has been invited to submit names to the provincial government for recipients of a Bicentennial Medal.

Ontario is honoring 1,984 people this year for their volunteerism and community service, and every municipal council, Indian Band and local service board is asked to put forward nominations from its community. The number of recipients depends on the size of the town.



When the evaporators are operating at full capacity, the vent on the top of the maple sugar shack pours clouds of steam into the cool air.

## Maple syrup is steamy business for Edward Bird

by Ted Brown

As ground starts to show through the melting snow, signalling the advent of spring, Edward Bird of RR 2, Georgetown, becomes a busy man. It's ideal weather for maple tree sap to run, and Ed collects and boils the sap down into rich maple syrup.

Bright sunny days when the mercury reaches 35-40 degrees F., followed by brisk 20 degree nights is ideal weather for the sap to run. The sugar manufactured through the leaves by photo-synthesis the previous summer is stored in the roots for the winter. When milder weather comes the tree sends the sap up the branches to nurture new buds.

By tapping the tree when the sap is running, the excess is drained off into two gallon sap pails, ready for collecting.

Ed hangs up about 250 pails around his farm with three or four pails on large trees. Only one is hung on trees 12 inches in diameter because overtopping can stunt the growth of small trees by hampering leaf growth.

He prefers trees growing in fence rows and along lanes because they have a larger top or "crown", as it is called. The larger the crown, the higher the sugar content in the sap. It takes about 30 gallons of sap from these trees to produce one gallon of syrup.

During good sap weather, a two gallon pail will fill in 24 hours.

Ed collects the sap in a wagon with a large tank, draws it to his holding tank in his "sugar shack" where he houses evaporators for boiling the sap. The tank holds 200 gallons and the two evaporators can boil it down at rate of 50 gallons an hour.

Wood is burned to supply the heat for the boiling, and the sap is boiled in three stages. In the first stage the boiling point of the sap is low, around 206-210 degrees. As the water evaporates, the boiling point rises, and Ed transfers the sap to the next step.

When the sap in that stage boils at 215 degrees, it is taken off the fire. He finishes the sap on a propane stove because he has greater control of the heat. It is left in this stage until the boiling point reaches 218 degrees. At that juncture the sap has become syrup.

Finished, the syrup should have an optimum sugar content of 66.6 per cent. Anything below 66.0 per cent is considered unacceptable because it is too watery.

The syrup is packaged in metal cans for sale on the local market. Ed sells his syrup in four sizes. The 500 ml can is \$5.00, the one litre can is \$8.00, the two litre can is \$15.00 and the four litre can for \$28.00. He also has a glass bottle in the 500 ml size for those wishing to buy syrup for a gift. His customers usually phone him in advance and pick it up at his farm on Trafalgar Road.

Ed began producing syrup commer-

cially in the spring of 1979, but made it as a hobby for four years prior to that. He originally boiled it outside, using a great deal of wood for all the syrup he produced. When he moved his operation into the sugar shack, where the heat is contained, the system became much more efficient.

This year Ed hopes to produce 80 gallons and to acquire that much syrup, Ed estimates he will have to boil down about 2400 gallons of sap. It will also take about eight to ten face cords of wood for heat.

It can be a lot of work says Ed, and one really has to enjoy it because the profits aren't great.

Ed is one of the 800 members of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association, an organization sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The association was created to promote maple syrup products and also develop more efficient woodlot management and better evaporating techniques.



Collecting the sap is a time consuming job. Ed Bird empties one of his 250 sap pails into a collecting pail before transferring it to the holding tank in his sugar shack. During good sap weather, a two gallon sap pail can fill in 24 hours.