



John McDonald 'on tour'

## A walk in the past

A group of Georgetown residents enjoyed an interesting tour of the town Sunday morning. Starting at the Mechanics' Institute they travelled over to the Bank of Hamilton, past Park's Hotel, the Bennett Hotel, down to Wilber Park Lake, past the Canadian House and the Dayfoot Tannery and then on to the new town hall.

If none of those names strike a familiar chord, it's a shame you weren't along with those 30 or so people. They were taking a tour of Georgetown, 100 years ago.

The walking lecture tour was organized by the Esqueping Historical Society and led by the society's president, John McDonald. It was a bit of an experiment, according to Mr. McDonald, to see what kind of public interest there is in the history of Georgetown. It proved to be a successful attempt which will probably be repeated sometime in the fall, he noted.

The tour took in approximately eight blocks within the central core of Georgetown. It began at the library on Park Street, known in the late 1800's as the Congregational Church. Ownership and use of the building changed in 1912 when it was turned over to the town for use as a library or (as they were called in those early Ontario days) "The Mechanics' Institute". At the time the library's doors first opened the public had a wide selection of 1,300 books to choose from.

Adjacent to the library is, perhaps, one of the buildings most closely identified with Georgetown's past and present; Knox Presbyterian Church. The building that stands today at the corner of Park Avenue and Main Street bears little resemblance to the building that was first constructed there in roughly 1837. A fire in 1901 destroyed a major part of the building.

An interesting point that Mr. McDonald noted is that, for some inexplicable reason, the large, stained glass, memorial window in the front of the church was spared by the fire.

Directly across from Knox Presbyterian Church, better known as 115 Main Street, is the oldest bank in Halton County. With new aluminum siding and a doctor's office now located in it, the old building really does not appear to be the original Bank of Hamilton, but it is. It was the first chartered bank in Halton.

Moving on, the group enjoyed brief glimpses into the past of such buildings as:

The McGibbon Hotel; originally known as Park's Hotel. It touted its "home-like lounges" for the many visitors to town.

The Bank of Montreal; better known in the late 1800's as the Bennett Hotel.

The Country Clean Laundromat; location of the oldest family business in Georgetown. Buck's Fine Food Store opened its doors in April of 1881 and continued to operate as a grocery store until May 27, 1972. However a member of the Buck family is still connected with the laundromat business so that the ties with the past are still intact.

Wilber Park Lake; Yes Virginia there was a lake right in the centre of Georgetown on which you could, at one time, enjoy a Sunday afternoon rowing your sweetheart in the shadow of the original

Georgetown high school. The lake was located directly east of (fittingly) Water Street. With the removal of a dam to the south of the lake in the early 1900's the lake disappeared, to be replaced with...nothing.

The penny arcade and coffee shop on Water Street; At one time the Toronto Globe carried a glowing review of that building. Known then as the Canadian House it was a favorite rest stop for travellers making the arduous trip from Guelph to Toronto or vice-versa. It was styled along the lines of an English pub and the Globe noted that there was always a "hearty welcome" for everyone. It by the way, was built in 1853.

(By the way, did you know Georgetown was, at one time, unofficially known as "Calamity Junction" because of its inherent ability to be the site of minor train wrecks?)

The Georgetown Memorial Arena; built in 1923 the arena replaced the outdoor rink just east of it on Silver Creek. That upstairs room was known then as the Rose Room during its tenure as the location of the Oddfellows' weekly meetings.

The two-storey apartment building on John Street; At one time 75 people worked within those walls trying to keep the orders of the Dayfoot Tannery on schedule. There had been a factory on that site from 1843 right up to 1966.

The Lions Outdoor Swimming Pool; It's not very nice to think about but, when Buck's Fine Food Store was right at its peak keeping Georgetown residents stocked up with fresh meat its slaughter house was located exactly on the site of the outdoor pool.

The old Chapel Street School; a fine building for

many years and, possibly more. Not bad for a building that originally cost \$12,000.

The Hydro transformer station on Guelph Street; for many years that was the centre of the town's political and cultural activities. Until 1960 that was the location of Georgetown's new (there had been one before it) old (we've got another one since) town hall.

Throughout the walk around Georgetown Mr. McDonald and other members of the historical society showed remarkable memories of facts, figures and recollections of all things "old". Pictures of buildings as they originally looked were compared with the buildings as they stand now; If they were fortunate enough to have withstood the march of "progress"?

## Soil tests start

Soil tests on the proposed site of the new addition to the Georgetown Volunteer Ambulance Service's James Street building were scheduled to get underway yesterday.

The tests had been delayed for a number of weeks while town staff carried out a fruitless search of town records for similar site tests that had been rumored to have been carried out a number of years ago.

Results of the tests are expected to be finalized in two weeks time at which point they will be considered by the town's personnel and finance committee.

## Seniors receive ID cards

"They must have heard us all the way up in Ottawa." With that comment Councillor Pat McKenzie produced an identification card which, courtesy of the federal government, has been sent to senior citizens throughout Canada.

The cards put an abrupt end to consideration by Halton Hills of a plan to issue identification cards to all senior citizens in the town. The plan, originally suggested by Mayor Tom Hill, was to have been patterned after a system set up by Milton. It was expected to cost approximately \$1,500.



AWARDS AND A DAY OF FUN were the rewards for a job well done as members of Halton Hills safety patrols were treated to a day at Burlington's Town and Country Fair. Claude Cadieux, Helene Migue, Aline Ferron, Gisele

Landry, Ronda Lemay, Judy Bartle and Karen Falow were presented with awards by Safety Officer Keith Woods.

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## NOTICE

TO GIVE OUR EMPLOYEES AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY A LONG HOLIDAY WEEK-END

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