

Halton's proud past in growing museum



AWAITING SENTENCE before the judge in this courtroom setting could take awhile, but many men stood before judges occupying that chair before it became part of the permanent collection of the region museum.

The ingenuity and innovations which have combined to provide Halton's heritage have formed an interesting and informative display for the over 5,000 visitors that have toured the Halton Regional Museum thus far this summer.

In the items of the collections it can easily be seen that Halton was the innovator of the area thanks to its varied background of traces and professions.

The museum is on the 200-acre site of the Alexander homestead which is now under control of the Halton Region Conservation Authority. Adam Alexander, a stonemason by trade, began employment in Canada on Hamilton's Dundurn Castle while he cleared the land of his new Milton Heights home, which he named Glen Eden.

Four generations of the Alexanders settled on the original property, each finding the area prosperous and ideas for its development plentiful. The rich, fertile fields of the farm made it possible for the family to produce a variety of grains, fruits, vegetables, and livestock with sufficient timber and limestone to be used on the farm.

The real inventor of the family, Adam Alexander III added a blacksmith shop to the farm in 1880 and harnessed water power to run much of the equipment used in the production of many farm necessities.

During the planning stages before full implementation of the power system which was fed from a reservoir atop the escarpment, the inventor was in close contact with another great inventor, Thomas Alva Edison.

Together they devised a dynamo that provided electric power to the Alexander homestead some 15 years before hydro was available to the rest of rural Halton.

The last remaining Alexander, Adam IV, now resides in the senior citizens home in Milton after turning his complete farm over to the county for use as a museum and park.

While the Milton area grew, as did the rest of Halton, some of the innovations such as the Alexanders' power wheel would not have been possible without the help of the people of Georgetown.

Spight and Brady of Georgetown actually built the water wheel for use in the generating dynamo, and were involved in the design of the water system that drove the large wheel that powered several of the farm's machines including a washing machine in the house on the farm.

The main building of the regional museum was the barn used by the family in their years of farming the area. The displays of early Halton life include a typical bedroom of the pioneers, a stone fireplace, and plates and serving utensils of the era.

The Victorian room, which occupies part of the main building, depicts the Barber family's sitting room with the actual pieces donated by the family from the time they resided in Main Street's Burwick Hall.

Also in the room is a unique lattice-work carving done for the Barber family by a blind man. The piece depicts a religious theme and is on display with the Kennedy family Bible. (Georgetown's founder).

"The people of those times loved and appreciated music," explained assistant curator James Middleton. "This is evident in the number of musical instruments the museum has."

There are nine pianos and organs on display in the museum with one very special piano, valued at over \$12,000.

This special piano represents one of nine that were sold in Acton. "We don't know whether or not they were built or assembled in Acton but we have proof that they were sold there."

The most expensive single item in the museum collection is a 1915 McLaughlin Buick worth between \$25,000 and \$30,000 depending on how much you love antique cars. The vehicle is on loan from the collection of Russ Cole of Hornby and was used on the CBC series, The White Oaks of Jalna.



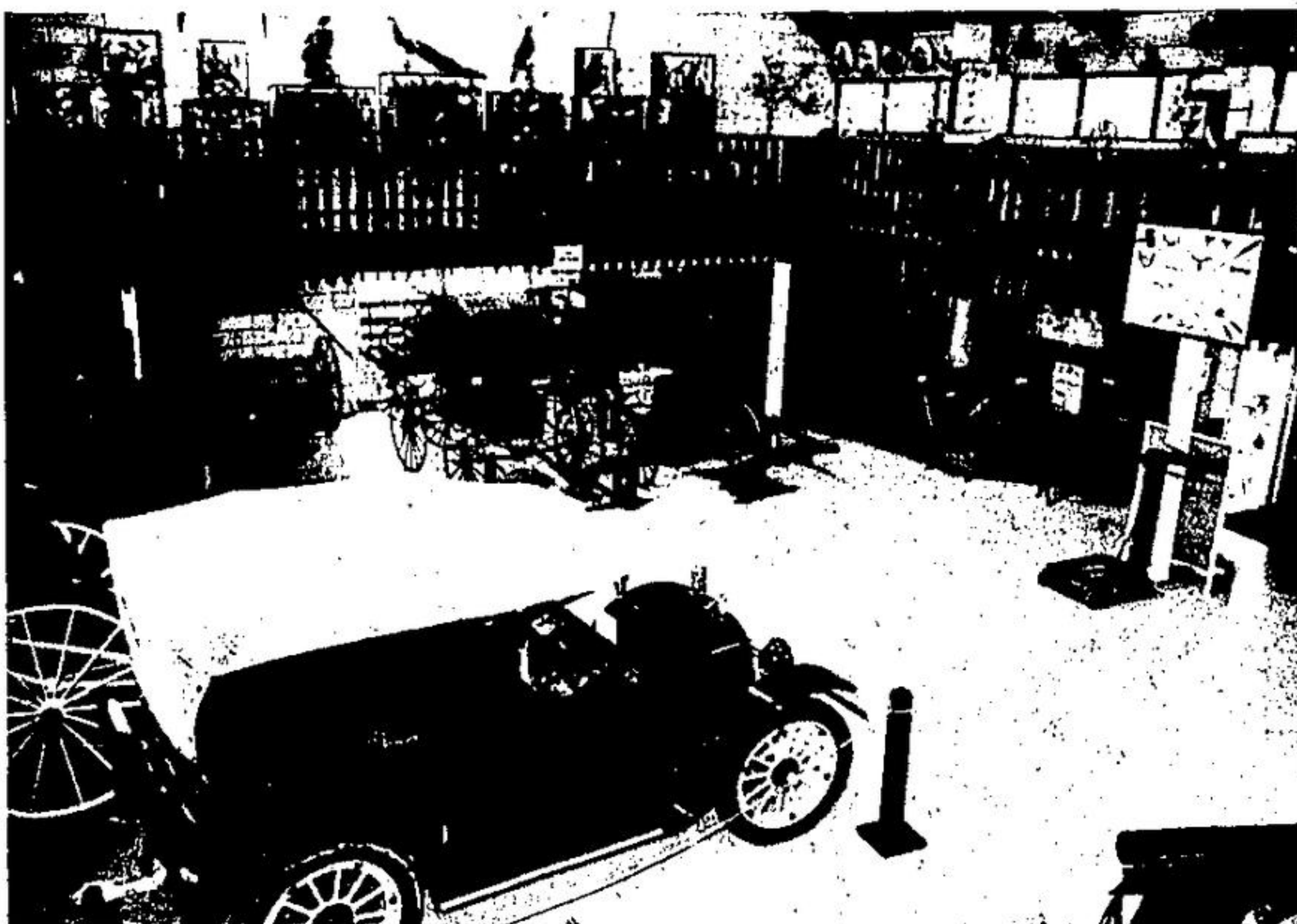
THE BARBER SITTING ROOM with furniture donated by the Barber family is featured in the Victorian Room of the museum.



THIS HUGE FIREPLACE is actually a reconstruction of one typical of the era. Behind the stonework are modern cement blocks leading to a modern chimney in the Alexander barn. The stones for the face of the fireplace came from the early grist mills of the area to make the fireplace authentic.



NO PARTS TO WEAR OUT. This was one of the most modern conveniences of its time. The motor not only cleaned the clothes but, with a few added accessories, cooked the meals, made the beds and washed the dishes. Wife power was common, but was well appreciated.



HISTORY ON WHEELS is depicted in the carriage house of the Halton Regional Museum. The carriage house was built as a Centennial project of the county of Halton.

The vehicle occupies a prominent place in the carriage house which was the Centennial project of the county. The modern building houses buggies, butter churns, ploughs, a working blacksmith shop, and display cases of stuffed birds.

The upstairs section of the barn that was once the storage area for the bounty of crops harvested each year by the Alexanders is now a further display area where visitors can see a typical courtroom around the turn of the century.

Robes provided by Judge Kenneth Langdon of Georgetown are seen along with the actual judge's throne, jurors' chairs and the prisoner's dock from the old Milton court house which served all of Halton.

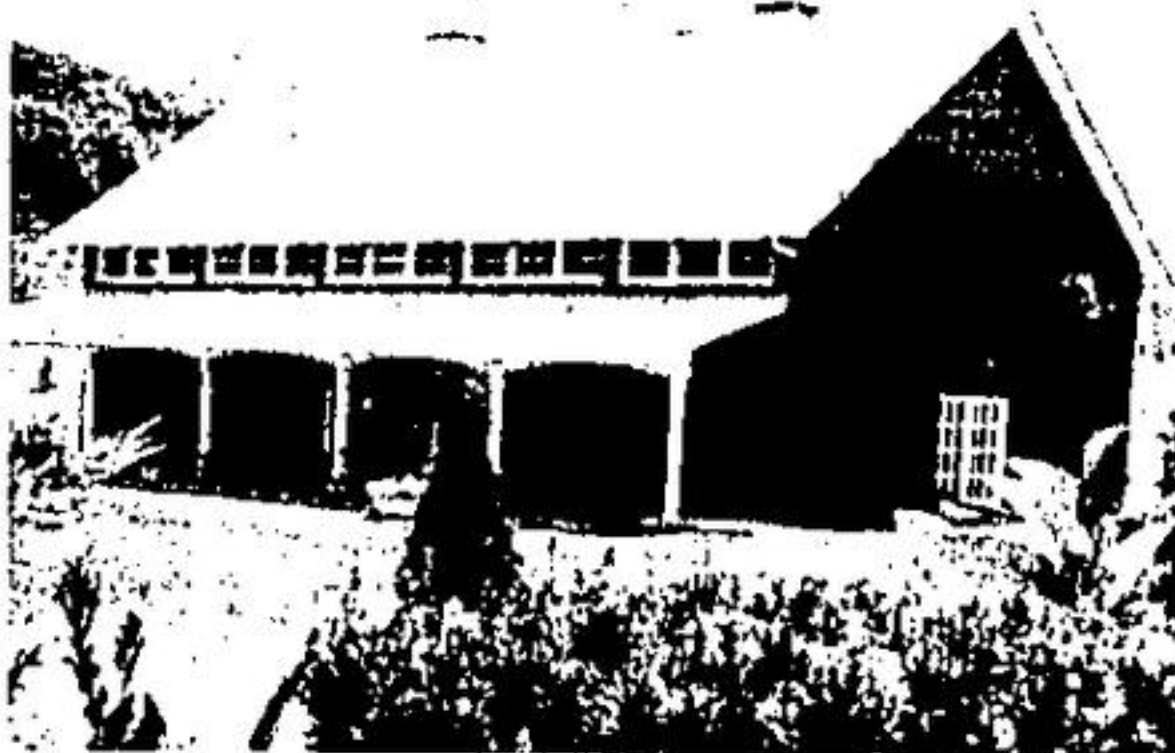
The circular saw blade on the second floor of the main building has been provided by the Lawsons of Stewarttown from the original mill of the area.

The ironides also rural Georgetown residents have shared with the people who visit the museum their butter working table, skates and a set of wooden water pipes bored from solid wood over four inches thick.

A velocipede, a type of wooden bicycle, is also featured in the carriage house and was provided by the Wilson's also of Georgetown. A total of 21 families from the immediate area have made donations, loans, or made available for purchase, items that help to give a glimpse of pioneer Halton.

Visitors from as far away as South Africa, Australia, and Europe have toured the regional museum. Antique buffs find the treasurers invaluable while silversmiths, antique car lovers, sewing clubs and art guilds each find something that has proven that Halton was not behind the times in any period of its development.

A nominal fee of 25 cents admission (or 50 cents for a guided tour) will give everyone a chance to see the part of Halton that formed the stepping stone to the innovative county we have today.



CENTRAL HEATING? These stoves are also from the Halton area and were used to heat the stores, bedrooms and living rooms of the early families of Halton.



AN ANTIQUE BEAUTY, this piano dates to the Victorian era. It would grace the home of the wealthier Haltonian. Brass candle holders or wooden platforms to hold oil lamps would provide light for the pioneer pianists.