

# the HERALD

Home Newspaper of Halton Hills

Cinderella reviewed -- page 12

New "Community" section -- page 9

Senior helps seniors -- page 13

## SECOND SECTION

### Georgetown's Frank Black

# In love with the sea - and hills of Halton

By PAUL DORSEY  
Herald staff writer

During his childhood in Bermuda, Frank Black of Georgetown would draw fire from his teachers at the naval academy for paying more attention to his notebook sketches than to his lessons.

Even more, those first undisciplined drawings struggled to capture the rhythm of the sea and the synchronized activity of the harbors that lines its shores.

#### ART INSTRUCTOR

Frank Black is best-known locally as an art instructor, having taught painting and batik, among other aspects of the fine arts, to students of all ages who assemble in area schools for his courses, but to those students and the many lovers of art who have visited his exhibitions, his talent as an artist is unquestioned.

Mr. Black has himself studied in Toronto with Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven, extended his cultural education in New York City, travelled the western hemisphere on painting expeditions and displayed his work in major shows across Canada.

Interestingly enough, Mr.

Black settled in Georgetown some 25 years ago primarily because of the area's intriguing geographical features and attractive landscapes. At that time, he recalled in a recent interview with The Herald, north Halton had been appealing to the creative instincts of at least three prominent painters and illustrators of the day with whom he was professionally acquainted in Toronto.

During the early 1950's, Mr. Black says noted Canadian artists Fred Brigden, C.W. Jeffries and Fred Haynes would make occasional sketching trips from Toronto, using Georgetown's McMillan Hotel as their home base while daily excursions into the undeveloped heartland of the Niagara Escarpment were conducted. Mr. Jeffries, in fact, later illustrated a book about the area that was compiled by a Rockwood author and entitled One Thousand Fences.

#### TAPPED WEALTH

Mr. Black, too, has tapped the wealth of rural scenes around the area that seem to passively offer themselves as exciting subject matter for painting and sketching. When the subject of the finished painting itself is not readily identifiable, the titles serve to resolve their familiarity, with recurring references to Silver Creek, Hillsburgh, Norval and other nearby communities.

Mr. Black was born in England in 1894 but emigrated to Bermuda with his parents as a child. There, while his father, an engineer, designed and built the bridges and the shipyards, he concluded his basic schooling in a naval academy and was already laying the

groundwork for his career as an artist, as well as a lover of the sea.

He settled in Toronto soon after, Mr. Black was employed as an apprentice at the McLean Publishing Company (now McLean-Hunter) between 1912 and 1915, where he learned about advertising and

#### HALTON'S PEOPLE

Mr. Black wonders, though, what has happened to the many promising paintings he viewed at Toronto galleries by artists who he considered to be in league with the best of the Group of Seven. Had these lesser-known artists won the support achieved by the Group largely through the McMichael collection, he speculated, they too would be familiar names to all Canadian art fanes.

With the exception of one or two Group members who were financially secure to begin with, few Canadian painters at that time were able to support themselves by painting alone.

"Outside of a few portrait painters, I didn't know anyone who made a living at painting," Mr. Black recalled. "You had to go into commercial art to get anywhere."

#### YEARS LEARNING

Commercial art became a necessary occupation for Mr. Black following his return from New York City, where he was a member of the Art Student's League. Even his initial critical successes - beginning with the acceptance in 1927 of one of his paintings at an Ontario Society of Artists jury show - lasted no longer than a decade. During that time, the jury shows saw his work accepted on a regular basis, selected from among thousands of entries.

#### COMMERCIAL ART

It was, he says, "quite a feather in my cap". Then, whether he was freelancing or employed on a retainer fee with specific companies, commercial art augmented his income from the sale of paintings for many years. He worked as a sketch artist at the Toronto Daily Star, at times illustrating daily news events or interesting features. In other years, he worked out of his own Toronto studio, preparing ad layouts and graphics for a number of corporate customers.

While his career in commercial art continued, Mr. Black's paintings were being singled out by the Royal Canadian Academy of Art for showings in Toronto and Montreal during the mid-1940's. A.J. Casson, another Group of Seven member, was a director of the Academy at the time.

Then, around 1952, Mr. Black began questioning his ability to continue painting, both physically - because of his virtual isolation in downtown Toronto with no personal form of transportation - and financially, because of his need to continue working at commercial art.

#### BERMUDA RETURN

Prior to his arrival in Georgetown, Mr. Black returned to Bermuda, visited the other Caribbean Islands and took time to study marine painting in the U.S. with two of the world's foremost practitioners of that particular art, Emiel Gruppe and Stanley Woodward.

Of Gruppe, with whom he worked side by side along the east shoreline of Massachusetts, Mr. Black says he was "the wizard at painting harbors and boat scenes." The key, he explained, is in closely studying the tides and the action of the wave. In Bermuda, he has observed, every third wave hitting the shore is a large

#### COMMERCIAL ART

one. Such extensive study and sketching is crucial if an artist is to properly capture the rhythm and movement of the sea.

Depicting the feeling of movement in a painting is equally important in Mr. Black's landscapes, many of which are readily comparable to the work of the Group of Seven, combining flowing lines, impressionistic color and varied directional surfaces often created with palette knife, rather than brush.

In recent years, Mr. Black has revived his old appreciation for watercolors, employing that format nearly as much as his oils. Mr. Black noted that his students and friends in the town's Palette and Pencil Club are similarly experimenting with watercolors with great success now that its popularity is again rising.

#### SUGGESTED CLUB

Mr. Black suggested the formation of such a club at the end of one of his art courses about 12 years ago, when

#### STUDENTS COMPLAINED

students complained that they had no forum in which they could follow up on their lessons. The club members gathered for their first organizational meeting at his home and continue to exhibit their works around town on a regular basis.

Mr. Black commented that he has always enjoyed teaching, whether to junior students at Holy Cross Separate School or adults at the High School night classes. He takes great pride in the fact that many of his former students are still painting and, on occasion, achieving a measure of success.

"I still enjoy helping people out who just want to learn," he says. "I get so enthused with people who want to talk about art and ask if I can help them learn more. I've known a lot of great artists and have stored a lot of useful knowledge about art, so now I'd just like to pass that knowledge on to whoever wants to learn."

#### Mr. Black is also proud

of the fact that many of his local

#### STUDENTS COMPLAINED

students have carried their artistic talent "beyond the picture-making stage," striving to create emotion-filled paintings rather than just "pretty pictures."

"A good painting will stack up right alongside good music and good books," he explained, pointing out that it would be unfair to the buyers of paintings to ignore their individual uniqueness, deliberately "pretty them up" in an effort to make them more commercially saleable.

Mr. Black advises his students to try for "boldness" in their paintings, avoiding extensive detail, utilizing their palette knife for particular surfaces and paying careful attention to the painting's overall composition. Nine times out of ten, he said, if something appears to be wrong with a finished painting, it will be the composition.

#### SPECIFIC TALENT

Mr. Black does not seem to be a great believer in the notion that certain individuals are born with a specific talent,

#### STUDENTS COMPLAINED

but acknowledges that it is "instinctive" for most youngsters to draw, or at least doodle, at an early age.

Whether they go on to develop that initial interest in art into a blossoming talent appears to be largely the result of how much encouragement they receive over the years.

As far as his own artistic heritage, Mr. Black reports that his uncle in England was a talented woodcarver and produced extraordinarily beautiful period furniture. His parents and immediate family, however, were not so artistically gifted.

Perhaps the encouragement, Mr. Black needed to continue his involvement in painting stemmed from his personal desire to depict and recreate the seascapes of his childhood. Regardless, his early success in accomplishing this objective no doubt turned his simultaneous love of the sea and love of art into a self-propagating occupation that continues unabated to this day.



Georgetown's best-known painter and art instructor, Frank Black, poses before a recent seascape he executed in oils at his Guelph Street home and studio.

### BREAKFAST WITH SANTA



A PAUSE WITH MR. CLAUS—Little Jenny Thompson was on hand Saturday at McDonald's on Guelph Street for breakfast with Santa Claus. (Above) Jenny shares a bite and discusses the stock market with Mr. Claus. (Below) Terry McLean of Acton headed straight for the jolly fat man's lap to tell him of all the Christmas treats he hopes to receive on Christmas morning.

(Photos by Michael Hallett)



#### GEORGETOWN THEN

Georgetown was a community of some 5,000 residents when the Blacks arrived from Toronto. The house in which they settled was one of the oldest in the area and occupied what was formerly known as the Harpell estate, which, according to Mr. Black, once stretched some distance east and west, far from its present boundaries.

As the 1950's began, the Harpell estate was situated close to what was then the town limit, marked by a brass plate embedded in the sidewalk outside what is now Kay's Grocery. The community has, of course, since tripled in population and stretched much further in size, but Mr. Black's real interest in the area lies outside the urban boundaries.

Mr. Black has spent many days trekking across the rural lands surrounding Georgetown returning from his expeditions with pencil and oil sketches that, back in the studio, are transformed into vibrant and colorful landscapes that invariably capture the essence of the terrain unique to this area.

#### By MAGGIE HANNAH

Herald staff writer

As the Christmas season proceeds local churches will be presenting a variety of services and special programs over the next two weeks.

Rev. Len Ewing of St. Alban's Anglican Church, Acton said there will be a special candlelight carol service at 7 p.m. on Dec. 17 as well as the regular morning service. On Dec. 24 there will be the regular morning service and a family service of Holy Eucharist at 7 p.m. as well as an 11 p.m. candlelight midnight eucharist with special Christmas music. There will also be a Holy Eucharist service at 10 a.m. on Christmas Day.

Rev. R.J. Berryman will be taking services at St. George's Anglican Church, Georgetown, on Dec. 17 there will be the regular eucharist service at 8 a.m., and choral eucharists at 9:30 and 11 a.m. The Sunday School concert will be held during the afternoon. On Dec. 24 there will be a eucharist service at 8 a.m. and a carol service at 10:30 a.m. as well as a family eucharist at 7:30 p.m. and a carol eucharist at 11 p.m. Christmas Day there will be a choral eucharist at 10 a.m.

10:30 a.m. in the Norval church. The Sunday School Christmas party will follow the regular lesson and carol service on Dec. 17.

Rev. David Sineclair will hold a service of carols and lessons at 7:30 p.m. in St. Stephen's Anglican Church, Hornby on Dec. 17. On Dec. 24 there will be Holy Eucharist service in the Holy Trinity Church at 8:30 p.m. as well as one in St. John's Anglican Church, Stewarstown at 11 p.m. Christmas Day there will be a family Christmas Eucharist at 10:30 a.m. in Hornby.

Rev. A.H. McKenzie said that the Sunday School pageant will be a part of the regular 11 a.m. service in Knox Presbyterian Church, Acton on Dec. 17. The Junior choir will be taking part in the service and it will also be white gift Sunday for the Sunday School children. At 7:30 p.m. the CGIT group will be presenting its Christmas service at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 24 there will be a regular service at 11 a.m.

Rev. Peter Barrow will be conducting regular services at 11 a.m. in Knox Presbyterian Church, Georgetown and at 9:45 a.m. in Limehouse on Dec. 17. There will also be a children's Christmas service presented by the Sunday School of the Georgetown church at 6:45 p.m. and the church choir is presenting a candlelight cantata called Night of Miracles with guest soloist Brenda McNeil at 8 p.m. in the Georgetown church. On Dec. 24 the regular morning services will be held in each church with the

young People's group presenting a Christmas play at 7:30 p.m. in the Georgetown church auditorium. There will be a watchnight service at 11:30

Norval church at 7:30 p.m. Rev. Charles Beaton of Trinity United Church, Acton said that the Sunday School Christmas



p.m. in the Georgetown church to be followed by a soup and crackers lunch in the auditorium. There will also be a Christmas Eve service in the Limehouse church although the time had not been decided at press time.

#### CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Rev. Ian MacPherson said that Union Presbyterian Church will hold a pot luck supper followed by a Christmas concert on Dec. 16. Norval Presbyterian Church will hold a pot luck lunch after the regular 11:15 a.m. service on Dec. 17 and the Christmas concert will follow it. On Dec. 24 there will be regular services at 10 a.m. in Union church and at 11:15 in Norval with a joint carol service sponsored by the joint youth group in the

Rev. John Griffin said the Hillcrest United Church Sunday School will present a dramatic Christmas performance at 11:15 a.m. on Dec. 17 to be followed by a family Christmas party and pot luck lunch. On Dec. 24 the regular service will be held at 11:15 a.m. in Hillcrest but there will also be a family service in Bethel United Church at 8 p.m. for both the Bethel and Hillcrest congregations.

#### PERFORMANCE

Rev. Walter Ridley of Norval United Church said that regular services will be held at 11:15 a.m. on both Dec. 17 and 24. Dec. 17 there will be a candlelight service at 8 p.m. and the Sunday School concert is at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 22.

Rev. Jim McFadden of Churchill Community Church, Acton said that there will be regular services at 11 a.m. on Dec. 17 and 24. There will also be a candlelight service at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 17.

Rev. Don Stiles said that in addition to regular services at 10 a.m. in St. Andrew's United Church Georgetown and at 11:45 a.m. in Ballinfad United Church the senior choir will present a candlelight cantata called Festival of Carols and Readings at 7:30 p.m. in St. Andrew's on Dec. 17. On Dec. 24, there will be regular morning services as well as Christmas eve services at 7:30 p.m. in Ballinfad and at 9 p.m. in St. Andrew's.

Dr. H. Llewellyn of St. John's United Church, Georgetown and Glen Williams will be holding a candlelight service in the Glen church at 7 p.m. on Dec. 17, a Festival of Lessons and Carols at 11 a.m. in the Georgetown church on Dec. 24 and a family Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m. in the Glen church and an informal communion service on Christmas Day at 10:30 a.m. in the Glen church.

Rev. Das Sydney of Acton Baptist Church will be holding 11 a.m. services on Dec. 17 and

Continued on Page 19