

## The Way We Were, part one

# Recollections of politics and policies



The old Bennett House hotel stood on the present site of Main Street's Old Bank boutiques.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** With this installment, the first in a weekly series, The Herald is pleased to introduce a comprehensive entertaining and fascinating review of this newspaper's 113-year history and of the events which led to its founding. The History of The Herald has been graciously compiled for us by local historian Rev. Richard Ruggie, author of Down in the Glen and other writings which offer residents an enthralling glimpse of their community's past.

In the initial chapter which follows, Rev. Ruggie examines the political and social climate into which The Herald and its immediate predecessors were born.

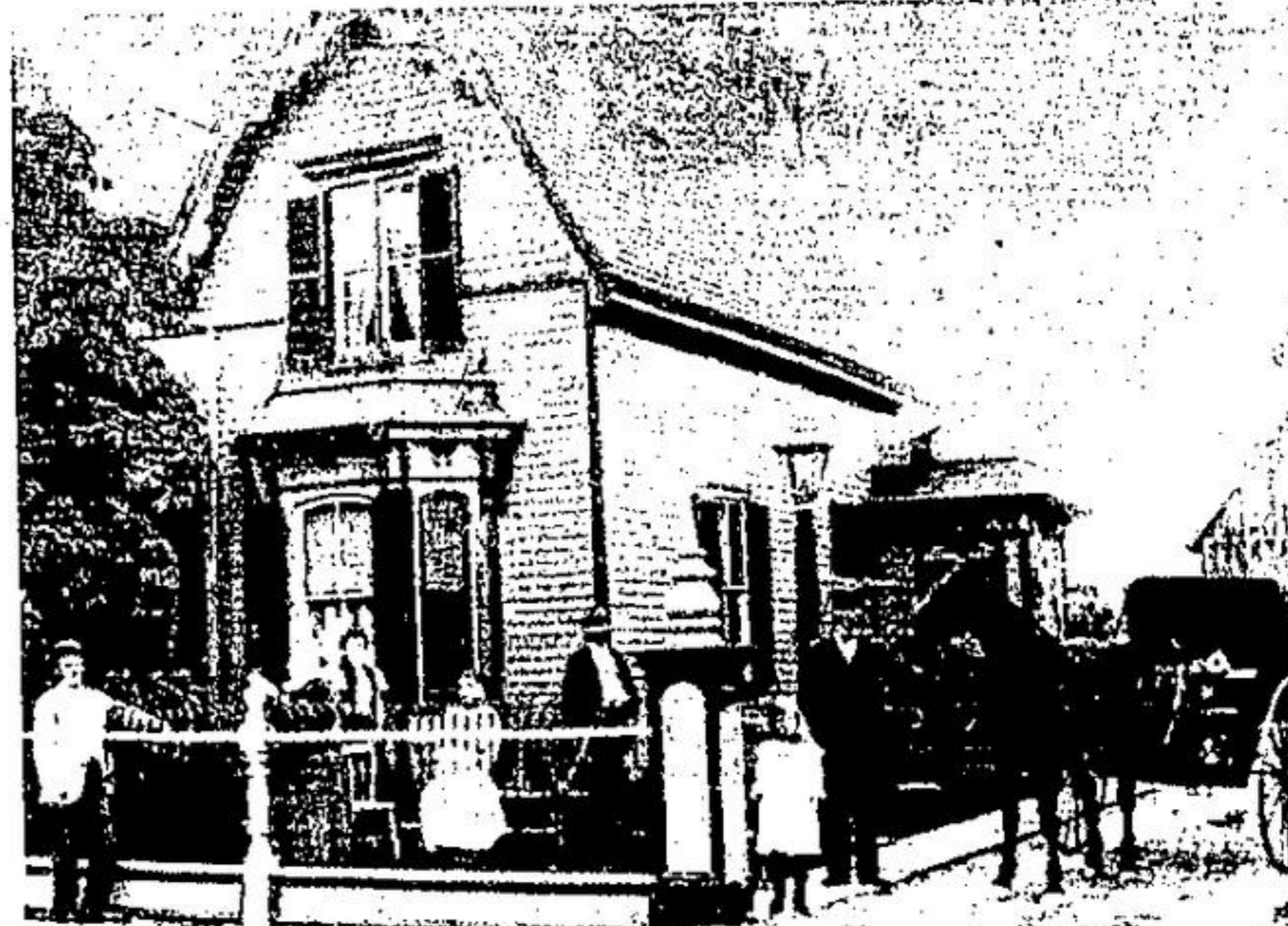
By RICHARD E. RUGGLE

Georgetown's first newspaper was a short-lived journal called the Star, published by a gentleman named S.I. Jones. Jones had come to Georgetown from Hamilton, where in 1858, he was working for a firm of book and job printers, J.W. Harris and Co., near Bay and Market Streets. At that time, he was also agent for the Toronto Globe, a Reform (Liberal) newspaper. In the same year (1858), the Reform party sponsored the birth of the Hamilton Daily Times. It had good advertising patronage, since most of the city's merchants sympathized with the Reform cause. Still, it had difficulty getting started, and went through a number of editors and managers in its infant years. Among these was Mr. Jones, who in 1861 was a co-owner of the Times. It must have been shortly afterwards that he came to Georgetown. (1)

The Star's printing office was in a detached building on Guelph Street, near the Chapel Street school. Here, C.W. Young came as a lad, and learned to stick type under Mr. Jones' tutelage. (2) Unfortunately, no copies of the Star survive, but it probably continued in the Reform platform of its editor.

**LESS VIVID**

Young was also the Georgetown correspondent for the Canadian Champion in Milton, which had been founded in 1861 as the successor to that town's oldest paper, the Halton Journal; the Journal and the Champion were both Reform weeklies. But as the owners of the Champion changed, the



On a Georgetown street.

paper's colors became less vivid. So when the secretary of the Halton Alliance, W.D. Brothers, joined with Richard White (who described himself as "a practical man") to start up The Milton Reformer in 1885 (the paper lasted until 1931), they proclaimed themselves to be "The Only REFORM Newspaper published in the County of Halton." (3) Halton must have boasted a large Liberal population then, for the Reformer was regarded as an echo of the old Halton News.

Not only did the papers of that era fly their colors; they also accused one another of political bias. So the Reformer charged in one article, "How Tory Newspapers Misrepresent and Conceal the Truth", while The Sun, a Conservative paper founded in Milton in 1874, in turn castigated the Grit press. (4)

One of the great battlegrounds was the Scott Act, by which the County of Halton had voted itself dry. A Presbyterian minister, M.C. Cameron, took a boycotting charge to court, claiming from the pulpit that he had been refused a horse at every livery stable in town because of his lectures against whiskey.

The rector of Grace Church in Milton was on the other side of the fence, and when the

townspeople of St. Catharines were about to decide the liquor issue by local option under the Scott Act, McKenzie, the rector, wrote to them claiming that Halton had reaped no benefits from its attempt to enforce temperance. The Reformer reported, "he says a single drunkard has not been reclaimed... There is no danger of him ever reclaiming a drunkard when he advocates the use of liquor that has this effect," then twisted the knife by adding, "and he does not forget to practice what he preaches." (5)

**SHORT-LIVED**

It was in this atmosphere that Isaac Hunter founded The Herald in Georgetown in the year 1866. The newspaper business was precarious, and many papers were short-lived. Those which survived often went through a succession of editors and owners. Papers were often linked to a party, or at least did not hesitate to proclaim their political principles. They sought their advertisers and their customers throughout the length of the county - in 1868, The Herald had local agents as far away as Oakville and Wellington Square (Burlington) - and political sympathies often determined which paper a person supported by advertising in or by reading. But it was a

changing situation.

By the end of the century, local weeklies had become less partisan. The few surviving copies of The Herald from the 19th century betray no political bias. In the 1868 list of agents for the paper, however, the only two whose political allegiance I have been able to identify - William Clay in Norval and W.C. Beatty in Onagh - were both Conservatives. So if the paper had a bias at first, it would probably have been a Tory bias. By the end of the century, too, the papers' markets had become more localized. So although it was called the Halton Herald in the late 1860s, it soon became The Georgetown Herald. In these uncertain times, The Herald was born.

**References:**  
1. City of Hamilton Directory, 1859 (Jones is not listed in the 1859 or 1862 directories); background sheet on the Hamilton Times, from the Hamilton Public Library.  
2. C.W. Young, "Reminiscences of Georgetown", The Herald, 22 June-21 July 1920.  
3. The Milton Reformer, Vol. 1, No. 1 5 November 1885.  
4. The Milton Reformers, 12 November 1885; The Sun (Milton), 29 June 1888.  
5. Canadian Champion, 5 May 1881; The Milton Reformer, 12

**NEXT WEEK:** A defrocked Methodist minister takes the reins.



Georgetown's Wilber Park Lake, now the James Street downtown. In background, left, is the old high school.

## Georgetown Newcomers Club

# Moving to Georgetown? They'll make you feel at home

By MAGGIE HANNAH  
Herald staff writer

The disorientation and confusion a stranger can experience in a new community leads to all sorts of problems including loneliness.

The Georgetown Newcomers Club would like to help new residents combat this sense of isolation by providing them with information and opportunities to get acquainted with both the town and its citizens.

The group originated with the Georgetown Y in August and has since been taken over by the members themselves.

"When they first suggested that we run the club ourselves, we didn't think it was possible," spokesman Joan Robson told The Herald. "Now we see it is very possible. They don't have the staff to look after everything and we can make our own arrangements, we find. They'll continue to provide the resources and we'll provide the manpower. We all feel there's a need for this kind of club."

At present, the group is trying to reach out in two directions. They want new Georgetown residents to contact them if they are interested in joining the group and are also looking to community service organizations to help them set up information meetings.

"We don't know what's out there," Mrs. Robson said. "We hope there will be volunteers from the social, legal, emergency and health service organizations who will be willing to come to a meeting and tell us what the town has to offer. This would be an opportunity for them to make themselves known to us. If they need volunteers, we wouldn't be adverse to hearing them say so. We hope to introduce people to what's available and get them involved in the community as a community."

**ABLE TO MEET**

Cathy Weldrick moved from Montreal to Toronto and then to Georgetown in October, 1978. She found she was able to meet a few people through the Y and her neighbors because her two children were in school and she had the time to go out. She knew of clubs for newcomers in various other communities and looked for one when she arrived in Georgetown.

"I was surprised there wasn't one," she said. "You have to get out and try to meet people or you can sit home forever. The husbands and children never have any problems because they are out every day and can't help meeting people. It's the housewife at home, especially the one

with small children, who feels isolated and needs others in the same boat."

Carol Pearson has three children aged two to six and agrees with Mrs. Weldrick.

"We arrived from Campbellford the first of March and I didn't even meet my neighbors until spring when we could get out and work in the yard," she recalled.

Doris Daley lives on the Ninth Line, north of Glen Williams, and pointed out that even though you have a car and the freedom from family ties, it isn't always fun going places on your own. She moved from Montreal in December, 1978, and still felt like a stranger when the club held its first meeting in August.

"All my neighbors were busy so they hadn't time to keep me company," she said, "and you do have to be careful who you befriend."

Roslyn Hartshorn said she hadn't had the time yet to get lonely when the club began. She and her family had just arrived from Montreal two weeks before, but she went anyway feeling that if she didn't make the effort to get acquainted with the community, the community wouldn't come to her.

**FRIENDLY PEOPLE**

"The people here are very,

very friendly and the people in the shops are friendly too, but that doesn't keep the phone ringing," Mrs. Robson said. She and her husband came to Glen Williams in June.

"Some of us were lucky," Mrs. Hartshorn said. "Our company moved the whole group of us up here from Montreal. Quite a few of us are in the Brampton, Mississauga, Georgetown area so we can pick up the phone and call each other. We all knew each other vaguely but we weren't really friendly until we came up here. We have each other if we're really lonely one day, but others aren't that lucky."

The ladies have a long list of possible activities but stress that they are still looking for community participation. They intend to have one planned activity each month. For November, it will be a day of curling at the North Halton Golf and Country club with instructors on hand to give beginners some pointers. They have gone bowling and may hold a sleighride during the winter so that the entire family can be included.

"We realize that some of the newcomers may be women with young children, so we arrange babysitting if it's needed," Mrs. Pearson said. "We also know that some

people may have trouble with transportation so we'll try to arrange that for people too, if they call us," Mrs. Robson said. "Even if it's just that natural hesitation of walking into a room full of strangers, we may be able to offer a ride to come alone unless we bring them."

**NO CUT-OFF**

The ladies have no cut-off time as to how long a resident has lived in town and still considers himself a newcomer. While some people can adjust and fit into a community in a matter of months, others may live there for several years and still have no friends.

"We are here for anyone, no matter how long he has lived here, as long as he feels like a newcomer," Mrs. Robson said.

As members feel more at home and cease to be newcomers, they will step back and let newer members take over, the ladies said.

Anyone interested in joining the group, which has about 18 members at present, may do so by contacting Joan Robson (877-0253), Roslyn Hartshorn (877-8858), Doris Daley (877-8789), Carol Pearson (877-5730), or Cathy Weldrick (877-2652).



Members of the Newcomers Club are reaching out to all new residents of town who might like to join them in getting acquainted with their new community. They also hope community organizations will come forward and make themselves known to them. Carol Pearson, seated with her son David, 2, Doris Daley (rear left), Joan Robson, Roslyn Hartshorn and Cathy Weldrick are part of the club's telephone committee who will welcome calls from newcomers or community groups.

(Herald photo)