

Tracing our roots: Members of our historical society search for memories of Esquesing's rich heritage

By **DAVE ROWNEY**
Herald editor

It was an event which seemed to symbolize our changing times. Mrs. Aileen Douglas, 78, spent a wintry after-

noon recently with two 12-year-old boys from St. Francis of Assisi Separate School. Before offering to walk her home, they told Mrs. Douglas of their interest

in computers while she explained to them what life was like in Esquesing during the 1920's and 1930's. The two young gentlemen had asked Mrs.

Douglas, an Esquesing Historical Society member, to help them with their local history project about old buildings in Halton Hills.

Mrs. Douglas remembers when her father Joseph M. Moore was the editor of the Georgetown Herald during the 1920's. She lived in a house her father built on the corner of Charles and Park St.

The preservation of old homes in Halton Hills is a major interest of Mrs. Douglas.

SPEAKERS
She became a member of the Historical Society four years ago and has attended the many meetings where speakers have talked about the rich heritage of Esquesing. Each member has a unique interest in history and different reasons for joining the Esquesing Historical Society.

Take for example Elaine Bertrand, the president of the Society. She was born and raised in the area. Her grandparents came to Halton from Simcoe County. Intensely interested in family lineage, she is the vice-chairman of the Halton Peel Genealogy Society. She has traced her family tree back



This is a picture of the Ballinasfad store and stage coach dating back to the time when horse and carriage were the primary mode of transportation.

SUFFERING
Genealogy makes one really appreciate the type of people who came to the area, suffering untold hardships, she says.

Tracing families in Halton can be a difficult chore. The first census was published in Halton in 1819. Marriage licenses are one way to trace families but it's important to know who the circuit rider was to pinpoint where the files might be, she says.

GOOD AS WHEAT
Mr. Burnett's book is tentatively called "As Good as the Wheat". His research has turned up some interesting facts about the Esquesing area.

According to a 1849 agricultural census Esquesing produced more wheat per acre than any other township in the British North America colonies, Mr. Burnett says.

Another interesting historical fact about the area is that Stewarttown once had the same population as Georgetown, but the latter community was picked as a railway stop

Heritage worth supporting

During the settlement of Upper Canada in the 1800's, life was simple compared to the present, but the hardships demanded extraordinary courage and strength.

Faced with the ever-increasing complexities of today's world, it becomes refreshing to delve deeply into a history book and read about our Canadian pioneers for inspiration.

Since 1975 a group of dedicated history buffs have met to ensure that Halton Hills residents feel they have a sense of identity, of distinction.

The current president of the Esquesing Historical Society is Elaine Bertrand. Mrs. Bertrand describes her own interest in history by saying "a man who doesn't know where he's coming from doesn't know where he's going."

Teacher Rob Burnett, who recently finished a book about our local pioneers, says he enjoys history because of "what it can tell us today about the past".

With local historian John McDonald as their first president, the Esquesing Historical Society has met regularly. The Society has been successful in finding a room for their collection in the Georgetown Library, but some of their objectives still haven't been reached.

In addition to more members, the Society is looking for local residents to drop by with old newspapers, old pictures, voter's lists or other historic paraphernalia.

The Historical Society has a very valuable resource with The Herald donating their volumes from 1920-1930, says Mr. Burnett. Because of a fire in the old Herald offices, The Herald editions are not available until the year 1918.

This means that numerous gaps in Georgetown's history still need to be filled. Residents who have any information are encouraged to help the Historical Society in these matters.

A short blurb about their Society says, "for those wishing to support the Society, but not become members, the cost is your knowledge and historical material. The reward is the satisfaction of knowing your contribution has added to our community's heritage."

Council adjusts bylaw for BIA

Council has endorsed an amendment to the 1977 Acton Business Improvement Area-board of management bylaw to adjust the board's membership number.

Instead of specifying a membership of nine, plus one town councillor, the new bylaw will say the board can have as many as nine members, as well as a representative from council. Only six members were nominated to the board of management this year, necessitating the change.

They are Ed Wood, chairman and proprietor of Acton's Family Cleaners; Bill Cook, vice chairman, Acton Free Press; Larry Greaves, treasurer, Sedmans; members at large Bill Savoie, Bank of Montreal; Gord Chapman, Mackenzie and Chapman; Paul O'Brien, O'Brien Meats and Acton Ward One Coun. Ross Knechtel.

Tennis lessons

Once again the Halton Hills Recreation Department is offering tennis lessons for all ages and abilities! Beginner and Intermediate Lessons are offered for adults, and junior lessons for those 16 and under.

For your convenience our lessons are offered in two formats: one per week for six weeks OR two times per week for three weeks.

The instructor for lessons to be held at Joseph Gibbons and Emmerson Park is Mr. Ed Serjeantson. Lessons begin the week of May 9, 1983. Register now to avoid disappointment - group size is limited.

A new summer session has been added for your convenience. Adult Beginner and Intermediate lessons plus Junior Lessons will commence Monday, June 20, 1983.

In your opinion:

Research librarian and Esquesing Historical Society director **WALTER LEWIS** said he's interested because one of his jobs at the Georgetown Public Library is administering the local history collection. With a degree in history, he said he's written local histories for Kingston, Deseronto, Frankfurt, Cobourg, and Lakefield. "It's part of the reason why I was hired to do this job at the library," he said. "One thing I've never done is the history of Roseneath, Ontario - just north of Cobourg - where I grew up. My family has been there a long time."

President of the Esquesing Historical Society, **ELAINE BERTRAND** said she's loved history all her life. "I'm interested in history in general, not only Halton Hills," she said. "I think the preservation of our history is important and I'm interested in this history because this is where I live." She said some of her family came back to Halton Hills, but not many of them.

"I was born here and the town was quite small. I've always been interested because my grandfather, John G. Harley used to be a reeve in Georgetown," Society member **BOB BURNETT** said. "He had a lot to do with the planting of maple trees all around Georgetown, like on Queen Street and the park." Mr. Harley said his grandfather was also

a principal and teacher at Georgetown's Chapel Street School. His roots also go back to the Harley Kay Knitting Company where the Silver Creek Towers now stand. Mr. Harley's uncle invented a special knit for children's wear and started the company. "I've always been interested in the early days," he said. Mr. Harley has been a member of the Society for two years.



WALTER LEWIS



ELAINE BERTRAND



BRUCE HARLEY



BOB BURNETT

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