

THEN AND NOW



EHS photo



Alison Walker photo

This 1913 photo (top) shows Wheeler's General Store in Glen Williams, owned by J.A. Wheeler. Today, it is the site of the Copper Kettle Pub (above). This year marks the 200th anniversary of the founding of Halton Hills (Esquesing township).

OPINION

WATCHING OUR SQUIRRELS' WORLD GO BY

ENTERTAINING, BUT NOT TOO BRIGHT, WRITES TED BROWN



TED BROWN
Column

Hardly a day goes by that I don't spend some time on the veranda at home.

Whether I take my coffee out there after finishing breakfast, just to mentally plan my day and watch the world come alive in front of me, or wrap up my day and come in from doing some outside work, I usually plant myself in my favourite wicker chair to contemplate the day I've just put in, usually with a beverage in hand.

The weekend is the best time to take my place on the veranda to relax, because The Sidekick can join me.

On warm nights, we have sat there well into the evening, watching the three or four cars meander down the road during a five-hour period.

Whenever I'm out there, there's one common denominator that always entertains me - it's the squirrels.

Now, I'm not a real fan of those furry, little critters. They have a passion for chewing their way into the attics of old farmhouses, creating havoc in the process.

And since I happen to

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-Ted Brown

live in an old farmhouse, nuff said.

But we had the kitchen walls spray-foamed a couple years ago, so they haven't been able to gain access.

I'm a bit more tolerant as they scurry up and down the old trees, not in and out of the house.

With my tolerant attitude, they can be downright entertaining as they go about their frenetic activities in the yard.

And the veranda gives me the perfect vantage point to catch all the action.

I know there are dozens of squirrels out there, chasing each other, scurrying out of the way of dive-bombing barn swallows, or running to the safety of a nearby tree whenever Hamish musters up enough energy to chase one.

But this time of the year, they spend most of their time gathering walnuts, to the point of obsession.

There are loads of walnut trees dotting the prop-

erty at home, most of them the result of the squirrels themselves. They bury the walnuts in the ground, then forget them, and eventually, some of those buried walnuts actually grow into trees.

Recently, I watched one of the less intelligent grey squirrels carry a walnut in its mouth, stop, shell the green skin off it, then place it in the grass, and pull the grass over it. (Like I said, not the sharpest squirrel on the grounds.)

Along came another, a black one, who picked up the "buried" walnut, carried it over to the base of another tree, where he buried it in the soft topsoil where the grass seed didn't sprout.

Soon after, a red squirrel came along, spotted the

freshly dug earth, dug out the walnut and headed up the hollow tree, to put it inside.

I smiled to myself, imagining what the conversation among those three squirrels might be like later that day.

"Hey man, I found a great walnut, freshly fallen from the tree," said the first one. "All I had to do was skin it and bury it."

"Yeah?" said the second. "Well, I found one already skinned, and I just buried it in my secret stash. Never even had to skin it at all."

"Big deal," said the third. "I found a skinned one right at the base of my own tree. All I had to do was uncover it and take it up to the hollow trunk of the tree."

Now I could make fun of those squirrels, and laugh at the fact they are actually robbing Peter to pay Paul and storing them in the damndest places, in the grass, in the ground or in a hollow tree.

But I do take great joy watching all this happen.

Because when they're doing that, they're not storing them in the attic of our old farmhouse.

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