

# GRAPE VINE

## Tannery Run limbo

Acton's proposed Tannery Run is "still in the planning stages" according to company co-owner Fred Dawkins. "We have not abandoned the plan but are continuing to try to work out details for the sale."

The Blow Press building on Perth Street is the proposed location for the leather museum and factory outlet store. Clothing will be made on site, artisans will work in merchant stalls and the museum will include old leather-making equipment and photographs.

When Tannery Run was launched in the spring Dawkins said the project would bolster Acton's tourism industry and enhance Leathertown as a unique destination point comparable to Freeport, Maine.

## Santa calling

Santa Claus will be burning up the phone lines to Acton Kindergarten and Grade 1 students this year.

Any Acton students who would like to get a call from Santa should fill out a form that will be handed out by the local schools.

Santa will be making his calls on Wednesday and Thursday Dec. 14 and 15 beginning at 4:46 pm.

## Acton artist alert

Acton artists have a unique opportunity to design the Town's Arts Alive award that is presented every five years to citizens who have

made outstanding contributions to the visual and performing arts of Acton.

The Town is holding a design contest for the award, which will be a 3-1/2" raised relief medallion. Entries must be in before Friday, Jan. 29 and forms are available at the Acton Library and all schools. The winner will receive \$300.

## Slip slidin'

No need to wonder what the roads are like this winter — a Ministry of Transportation weather and road condition update is just a call away.

The annual winter reporting service operates 24 hours a day with highway condition updates across the province. Just call: Ontario-wide: 1-800-268-1376. From Acton: 1-800-268-5407.

## Rockwood revellers

Kudos to Rockwood and area residents who got into the Christmas spirit and decorated for last weekend's Festival of deLights.

First prize for the best storefront went to Eden Place in Eden Mills. Top of the Village took second prize and Times & Seasons Flower Shop grabbed third.

In the best commercial building category, first place went to the Coach House in Everton. Edenwood Furniture in Eden Mills took second place and Hog Hill Enterprises took third place.

The judging in the residential category was very close but the over-all winner is Colette McFadden of Princess Street, who receives \$100 worth of certificates. Pat and Mike Shannon of Parkedge grabbed second place and \$75 worth of gift certificates and \$50 in gift certificates goes to Mel Tolton of Eden Mills for third.



Some of the top science students at Acton High have been invited to enter their experiments in the upcoming region-wide Science Fair this spring. The students took part in the school's annual Science Exposition last week. Shown here, back row, left to right are Shelby Duponte, David Harmer, David Wray, Andrew Edmundson, Janisse Bailey. Front row, Brooke Inglis, Tanya Edwards, Sarah Austin. (Frances Niblock photo)

# The winter of my twelfth Christmas was special

My twelfth Christmas had a special enchantment which has never been duplicated. It was the year before "fool's" bells jangled in and elfland ceased to chime, when the young imagination was flexible and receptive to every nuance of beauty and emotion.

Our wonderful Entrance (Fourth Book) teacher set the mood for the holiday season by reading daily excerpts from Dickens' A Christmas Carol and Henry Van Dyke's The Other Wise Man. Miss M.Z. Bennett was an excellent reader with a profound respect for the written and spoken word. For the first time in my school years, I perceived the magic of the English language from the pen of master story-tellers. It was my introduction to Charles Dickens and Van Dyke, who have remained two of my favorite authors. The last copy of The Other Wise Man that I read many years ago was battered beyond repair, but I have not forgotten its lovely message — a message that our sad old world needs now more than ever.

The Christmas spirit in Acton of the late Twenties was kindled early in the month, taking on in its first stages the guise of concert mania. Every group and organization in town went to work on Christmas entertainment, ranging from mediocre to magnificent. Tempers flared, harsh words were exchanged, but most of the bitterness was forgotten on the final night when cheese cloth angels went through their paces before rows of anxious parents.

Church halls and schools were packed for every concert. The rural schools, like old Lorne School, drew wall-to-wall crowds that overflowed on to window sills. Heated by wood-burning stoves, the one-roomers boasted temperatures that defied the quiet cold outside.

Another welcome feature of rural school concerts was the sand-

wich and coffee lunch served after Santa departed with a last jangle of bells. The Baptists had a tradition, which I believe they still observe — a sit-down Christmas supper.

We Anglicans were usually too busy to eat, as our entertainments sometimes dragged on for two hours. Exhausting ordeals, but exciting because one never knew what might happen. Predictably Sunday school infants on stage for the first time forgot their lines and howled at the top of their voices. There were always Tableaux performed by the most angelic-looking members of the choir. I was chosen just once for a Silent Night tableau, the year of my twelfth Christmas. Chosen once and never again, because when the white-robed cast knelt on the floor in an attitude of reverence, my knees creaked and cracked with a pistol shot effect audible to the back of the hall. My Sunday school teacher never forgave me for this aberration. She accused me of cracking my knees on purpose, an unfair exchange — as I had no control over my protesting limbs.

As kids my sisters and I were blessed with generous and thoughtful aunts and uncles who sent Christmas parcels from England and Alberta. What excitement when the parcels arrived, always early so that we had to wait days before we learned their contents.

The year of my twelfth Christmas my favorite English aunt sent book gifts and sweaters. There were rag books for the two youngest and school girl tales for the older siblings. I was enchanted with my book and even yet I imagine that I

can still smell its fragrance, which was unique with English books.

I inherited a seasonal job when I was twelve. Because of a male gap in the family it became my responsibility to fill four Christmas stockings after my sisters were safely snoozing. Much caution and care went into the stuffing because all had to be the same, including lumps of coal and onions in the toes. Why coal no one seemed to know, unless it was a reward for naughtiness. If so, all four of us qualified.

The contents also included oranges, apples, nuts and candies and sometimes cookies, the ammunition variety, unbreakable and filling when dunked in milk.

Although a neighbour's horrid daughter had broken the news about the Santa Claus myth, I carried on the pretense for my sister's sake. A sister two and a half years my junior used to grin widely when I enthused about St. Nick but she held her counsel.

The winter of my twelfth Christmas was snowy and very cold. It was almost midnight when I finished stuffing our black knobby stockings. Before tip-toeing to bed, I went to the window to look out at the moonlit night. For a few seconds, I held my breath as I saw a magical spectacle I have never witnessed since. A ring of cottontails dancing in the snow! Silent tears fell as I watched those bunnies celebrating Christmas in their own inimitable fashion. It was a sight to remember for a lifetime.

(This article first appeared in the pages of the Acton Voice in December of 1985.)

## PETUNIA PATCH

With Esther Taylor



# HEY!

How do you plan to help the needy and less fortunate this Christmas season?



"I give gifts to the less-fortunate every Christmas. I give extra food to the food bank and I donate gifts to the Salvation Army. I try to do a good deed each day."  
*Freda Armstrong, Elizabeth Drive*

"I don't know. We are on social assistance so I guess you could say we are the needy.

My husband is out of work and we have bought some presents for the kids but things are tight."

*Diana Mitchell, Mill Street*



"Every year I make a Christmas donation to the Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto. We have a bunch of kids and grandkids and that's where I want to help out, especially at this time of year."

*Fred Dunn, Ransom Street*

"Our family supports the FoodShare food bank here in town. We don't make a special donation at Christmas because the need is there year round."

*Bill Lasby, R.R. 2, Rockwood*

