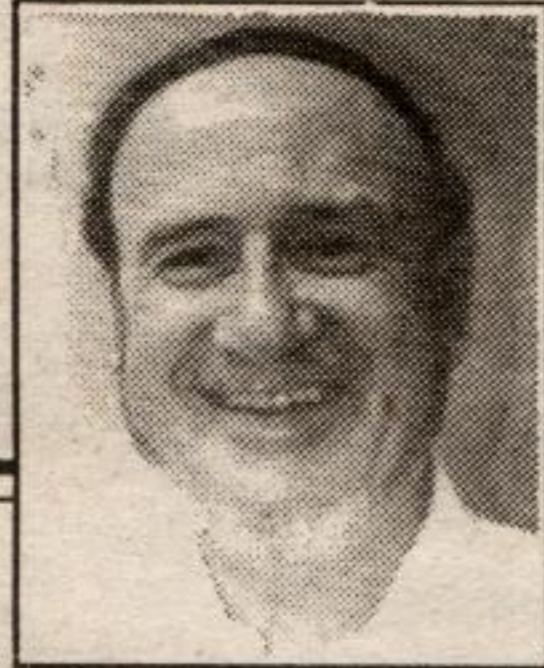


## EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



### Former mayor foresaw Acton's lost autonomy

(In order to examine the effect of regional government on Acton, some background is necessary. It has been 20 years since Acton's dissolution as a municipality; surely an appropriate time to look at regionalization's successes and failures.)

Residents of Acton, Georgetown and Esquesing had the opportunity in 1973 to vote on three names for the new town. They chose Halton Hills over North Halton and Esquesing as their name, thinking of the presence of the Niagara Escarpment which straddles the town and influences the weather.

There was much popular sentiment for the name Esquesing, the township out of which both Acton and Georgetown emerged which goes back to the founding of Upper Canada. A native Indian word, some say it means "Land of Tall Pines," after the huge pine forests which covered the area. Others maintain it translates as "Last Creek Out." Anyhow, voters, especially in Georgetown, rejected the name which some radio and TV announcers never pronounced properly anyway.

Voters may not have known that Halton Hills already was the name of a cemetery on the Guelph Line, just north of the Dundas Highway. Or maybe they did and were already laying a corpse to rest because there was much apprehension among Acton residents 20 years ago about losing their autonomy. It extended to the local Acton Council as well, under the leadership of the late Les Duby, one of Acton's most loved mayors.

There was mistrust that a larger Georgetown, along with Esquesing representatives, would dominate the new 13-person council, in which Acton would have three seats, Georgetown six and Esquesing three. The mayor would be chosen at large.

However, when councillors looked at the future through a dark looking glass they knew it would be an impossible struggle to maintain a separate Acton on its own.

The once-strong industrial base had already been weakened and stringent new anti-pollution laws threatened the existence of Beardmore and Co., the town's largest employer.

Ironically, the Beardmore plant straddled the border between Acton and Esquesing in some areas and the company avoided paying taxes for over a century. (Esquesing councillors thought it was in Acton, and vice versa.) Borders were blurred, almost an impossibility in the new town.

With the taxation base dwindling and the strong resolution from the Province for change, opposition to the proposals crumbled. In the fall of 1973 Acton voted for members of the new Council and a name for the new town, which was officially to govern beginning in 1974.

Perhaps being named for a cemetery was not a good omen. Imperceptibly, but steadily, decisions once made in Acton were now a Halton Hills concern. Thanks to the liberality of councillors from both Esquesing and Georgetown, the local issues were left to Acton councillors mainly. The same courtesy was extended to Georgetown and Esquesing reps on strictly local issues. The broader concerns were shared by all.

The goodwill and harmony soon disappeared, though, and it wasn't long before the Acton reps on Halton Hills Council were calling "foul."

Acton's last mayor, Les Duby, despaired of the future of Acton in the new setup after only a few months. He felt decisions were being made to homogenize the town. Acton, he said, was losing its identity and the lion's share of benefits were going elsewhere.

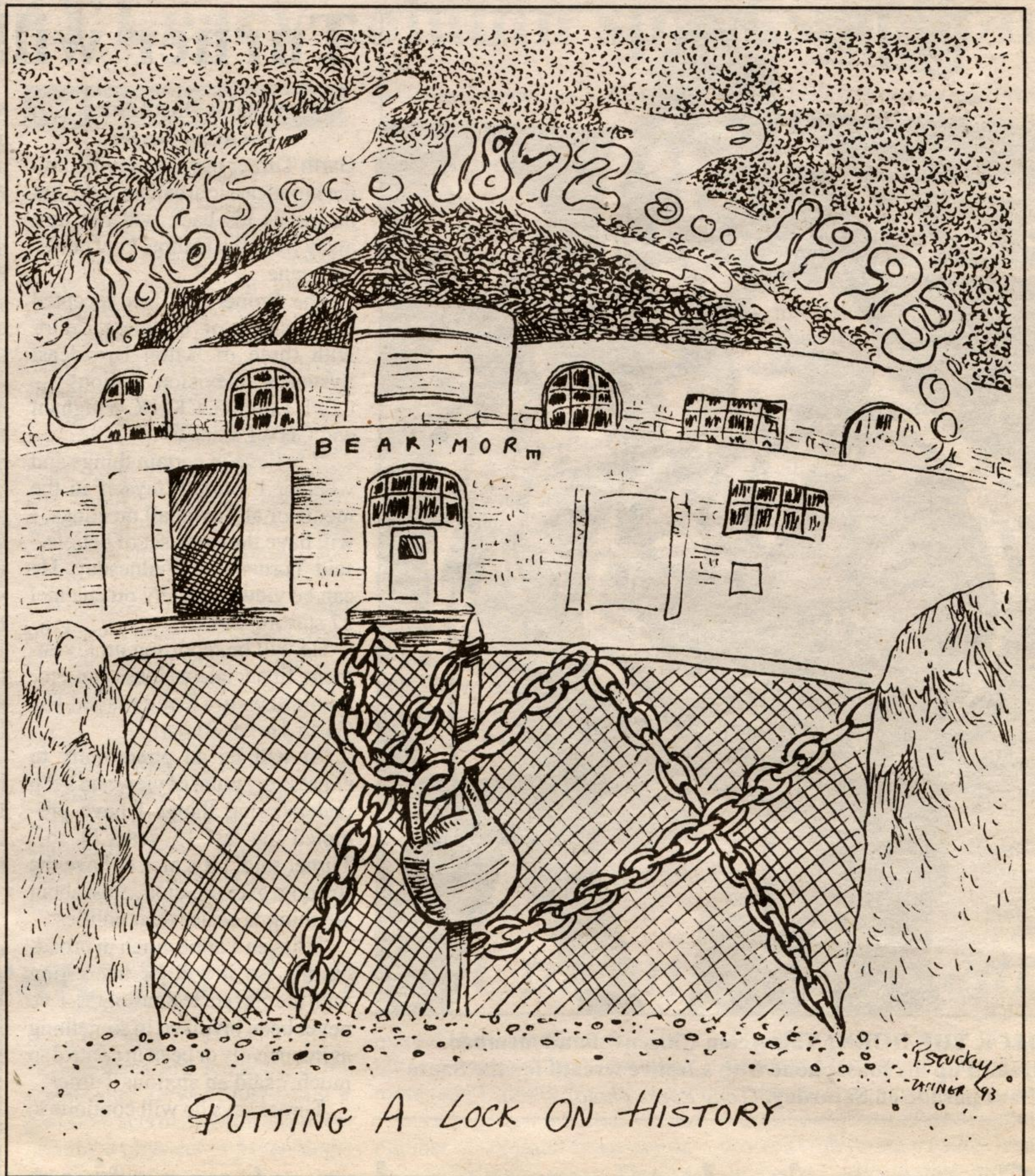
It was a feeling shared by many. The pride and sense of being in control of at least part of the tiller were gone. The pessimism extended to business and industry, which in later years would result in the loss of many of them.

Twenty years have elapsed and that feeling hasn't completely gone, despite some of the benefits regional government has conferred. There is still a nagging doubt that we would have been better off going it alone, despite the odds.

Acton has been fortunate in having strong representation at the Halton Hills Council table and at the Region, but that feeling of estrangement from the rest of Halton exists.

Sometimes it seems we have closer ties with Wellington County than with Halton. Part of it is proximity and the fact we're in the upper corner of Halton — out of sight and out of mind.

We'll examine further next week.



### Legion welcomes new members

#### LEGION NEWS

BY HARRY NORTON

There were three tables of bridge last Wednesday and 16 1/2 tables of euchre on Thursday. The winners for bridge were Ward Hamilton, Grant Allan and Muriel Savage. Winners in euchre were Jean Milne, L. Morency, Lil Howson, Rita Kelly, Robert Tonelli, Ukie, Helen Quinn, Mildred Carriere and Kay James.

On Friday, Nov. 19 the following new associate members were initiated into Branch 197: John Ahearn, Kathleen Allen, Jose Daponte, Dorson and Larry Frizzell, Tracy Hagan, Kelly Harkley, Peggy and Robert Harris, Ruth Jackson, Gayle Jarrett, Blair McCallum, April McNamara, Frank Morton, Peter Olsen and Marlee Wedge.

Now that grandchildren are eligible as voting members it is good to see so many young people taking advantage of this opportunity. Maybe with these younger members we'll get the children's fun days activated again. All we need are willing helpers.

Saturday, Nov. 20 was a very busy day at the Legion with the meat draw and karaoke night followed by fish and chips. With cooks like these, you could steal

all the business in town!

If the packed parking lot on the weekend was any indication, the Cat Show was well attended. I bet we'll see them back next year.

Coming Events: Bridge, Euchre and the Meat Draw — Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, Nov. 24, 25, 27.

Seniors' Dinner — Tuesday, Nov. 30. If you have not picked up your tickets, you may do so from the Legion or the Rotary Club.

General: Don't forget Nov. 30 is the deadline for paying your 1994 dues and becoming one of that elite group of Early Birds!

#### LETTERS

##### Hurst's verse

Ottawa, Canada.  
Prime Minister  
"John Christian"  
Begins his term  
with honour.  
As he promised,  
the helicopter deal  
has been cancelled.

Joe Hurst  
Mill Street

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