

EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



By the old mill pond

The next meeting of the Esquesing Historical Society at the Seniors' Centre in the Acton Community Centre is slated to look at the role Fairy Lake and Prospect Park have played in Acton and highlights some of the changes that have taken place over the years.

Since I was invited to speak, and cannot because of a previous commitment, it might be appropriate to recount some of my memories of the "pond" and park, which have been one of the little-known secrets for those who pass through town.

Think back a few years and you'll remember when the end of the lake next door to the arena was a soggy morass of swamp, weeds, stumps and bulrushes. The school creek entered the lake into the swamp, which was a perfect breeding ground for turtles, muskrats and mudcats. The swamp extended past the old weathered grandstand, which stood next to the lake just about opposite where the Region's pumping station is now.

The grandstand centered on the hardball diamond, where many a fancy pitching duel drew hundreds to watch games in the old Halton County Intermediate Baseball League on Saturday afternoons.

The location of the grandstand and the screened backstop were supposed to stop the foul balls that batters hit. They usually did, but every so often someone would crank a foul ball off his bat and it would sail over the grandstand to land kerplunk, right in the muck. Dozens of boys would try to retrieve the ball, either for the dime the baseball club would offer, or for their own fun.

That all changed in 1967 when, after negotiations between the Credit Valley Conservation Authority and Beardmore and Co., which owned the lake, it was decided to dredge and create a better reservoir for water from tributary creeks. It was a pilot project that suggested the hundreds of mill ponds through Ontario could be rejuvenated and the quality of the water improved both for drinking and recreational purposes. Since Beardmore used the water in the leather process, it was not lost on some critics that it would also benefit the company.

Critics also noted that the general manager of Beardmore & Co. sat as Acton's representative on the Credit Valley Authority, suggesting he had more than a passing interest in the project. In any event, the dredging was done over a two-year period and it opened up a number of springs that had been blocked by debris over the years. The springs improved the quality of the water immensely and the lake opened up into a splendid vista for fishing and recreation.

Conservationists would also note that it destroyed the habitat for turtles, muskrats, red-wing blackbirds and other denizens of the swamp, but generally public opinion liked what they saw when the dredging was finished. It created what is now Rotary Park and the desert that extends west of the Lakeview subdivision.

It brought new occupants to the lake - Canada Geese and ducks galore, which had avoided Fairy Lake when the snapping turtles and muskrats ruled the roost.

People often ask whether there was always a Fairy Lake or is it, like so many others, a creation made by damming the Black Creek. Early records indicate there was some accumulation of water there, which the dam, built to power the flour mill, expanded to cover the 88 acres of land the lake now occupies. That was around 1818 and there are few of us around now to vouch for that information.

Acton's Early Days, that bible of early Acton information, says the flour mill built by the Adams family stood right where Halton Flour Mills is today and there was also a saw mill, since demolished, below the dam spillway. It was, of course, known as the "mill pond."

It wasn't until the 1860s when Sarah Augusta Secord, "an educated woman of an aesthetic temperament" succeeded in persuading the people of the then village, that this expanse of crystal clear water with its wooded hills, cultivated farms and pretty homes should have a more dignified name. The book says she christened it Fairy Lake, the "euphonious name" it has carried since.

I could go on for pages and more pages about my memories of the lake and picturesque Prospect Park, which juts into Fairy Lake like a pointing finger. We could recall the old swimming hole, its extension at the old radial bridge where boys risked the danger of swimming without bathing suits in the company of tub-sized snapping turtles.

We could talk about the fishing, the boating, the shinny games, the skating, ice boating, ice cutting, languorous afternoons in the park, the ball games, the hockey in the old arena, the fall fairs, the sad happenings such as drownings, all of which have happened in the last century. The topics are endless.

Well, the historical society is giving the opportunity to take that trip down memory lane on Wednesday, June 12 at 7:30 pm in the community centre right in the park, within sight of the lake. It should be an evening you won't forget.



Your LETTERS

Students lose more than transportation

To the Editor,

I am writing this letter to express my shock and outrage at the fact that the Halton Board of Education chose to terminate the late buses (activation buses) as of May 15, 1996. In areas where public transportation is readily available this is not an issue, but in rural areas of Milton and Halton Hills, this is a most unfortunate situation.

As a parent of children who have frequently used the late buses and as a social worker providing counselling for young people in local high schools, I am personally aware of the implications of discontinuing this service. Without these buses, high school students can no longer get after-school help, join any extracurricular activities such as sports teams, student council or music programs, use the school library or receive counselling. This just begins to touch on the services available to the student who is able to stay after school.

Asphalt sealers not all 'fly-by-nighters'

To the Editor,

I am writing to you concerning the article in last week's *Tanner Plus!* about asphalt sealers and pavers. As an asphalt sealer, I feel your story didn't serve my business any justice. I work in the Milton, Campbellville, Acton, Rockwood and Brookville areas.

I have sprayed approximately 200 to 300 driveways in this area in the last two years, with outstanding results. Not one complaint!

I feel your story may frighten my present and future customers when you urge extreme caution when dealing with door-to-door paving and sealing companies.

Being in this service, I listen to many "horror stories" involving paving/sealing companies and I agree with the fact that there are many fly-by-nighters out there. The only advice I can give is to be certain who you are dealing with. Consumers shouldn't take prices from a company that is not in their area. They'll be difficult to reach if the consumer has a problem or complaint.

ceive counselling. This just begins to touch on the services available to the student who is able to stay after school.

As a result, children in rural communities who cannot afford their own cars or who do not have parents available to pick them up, are no longer able to avail themselves of the full range of programs offered. This seems very discriminatory and suggests education in our community is becoming a service provided in the fullest only to wealthy or urban youth. At a time when society is looking to keep teens active and involved in positive activities, Halton is forcing many of its young people to drop out of programs.

Parents of younger children may not recognize the need for this service as yet, but when their children are ready to make use of it, it will not be there for them either. I understand the need for cutbacks in education, as in every other area, but the rural community too often pays the price. I am hopeful that our local school trustees and political representatives, along with parents in Halton, will express their outrage at this latest disservice.

Elayne M. Tanner,
M.S.W., C.S.W.

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If you have any questions, contact me at 519-821-9696.

Rob Watson
Fine-line Driveway Sealing

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