

Firefighters battle inferno in intense heat

Continued from Page 1
 Cunningham said. Cunningham refused to speculate on possible causing for the fire saying the investigation would proceed once the fire was out.

Canada Packers closed the tannery in September of 1986, throwing hundreds of Acton employees out of work. There's been a tannery at this site since 1842 when

Abraham Nelles, a United Empire Loyalist and veteran of the War of 1812, came from the Niagara peninsula to found the business. It was bought by Coleman and McIntyre, a firm from Dundas, in 1852. They built a stone addition to the original frame building and manufactured sole leather with hides imported from Spain.

It was during Coleman and McIntyre's proprietorship that the first fire hit. It burned down and was rebuilt. Two more proprietors owned the premises before George L. Beardmore bought the entire property in June of 1865. He repaired the buildings and equipped them well with the best machinery of the time. But again fire struck and

when the buildings were rebuilt it was entirely of stone.

Over the years the Beardmore family business expanded by purchasing another small tannery producing cordovan leather, it was turned into the manufacture of harness leather. Later the company produced belting leather for industrial use.

The tanning industry was attracted to Acton by the availability of hemlock bark, an essential ingredient in tanning leather. When Acton and area started running out, the company built another in Bracebridge in 1879. It closed in the early 1900s and many employees came to Acton.

The Beardmore family sold the business to Canada Packers in 1944, the end of

their 100th year in business. When synthetic material replaced hemlock bark the Anglo-Canadian Leather Co. in Huntsville relocated to the Acton plant and more than 50 employees came with them. It explains why so many Acton families have roots in Bracebridge and Huntsville.

When the plant closed in 1986 only just over 300 employees were still at work. The Acton plant was also the only source for shoe, belt and

leather goods for the Canadian military by that time. The tanning industry in Canada was hit hard by the removal of tariffs by the federal government. The removal of tariffs allowed cheaper imported leather into the country and the companies found it difficult to compete. There was also pressure from the Ministry of the Environment because of the large amount of toxic material produced by the tanning of leather.

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Dr. Pun wishes to announce his retirement from the practice of family medicine in the town of Acton effective August 1, 1998.

Dr. Pun wishes to thank the community for the privilege of serving them for the past 25 years.

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