

# GRAPEVINE



## Fair prep

Staging another fair without a building is again the biggest challenge facing the Fair Board of the Acton Agricultural Society as it counts down to the 87th edition of the popular fair.

"We've had to do an awful lot of additional work to accommodate the (Homecraft) displays and what we do in the case of rain," president Doug Fread said, adding there's no contingency plan, "we're rained out," if the weather is bad. Like last year, two tents will house the Homecrafts exhibits, baby show, Miss Acton pageant and entertainment.

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Too bad there won't be a crazy canoe race at this year's fair - organizers said it was fun, but the contest had run its course. It would have been a cakewalk for the perennial winners, the Peter Zions team, including Acton's Don Finnie.

Finnie and three friends from Georgetown paddled 350-miles to James Bay this summer - a turning 40/millennium voyage that included 45-sets of whitewater, great fishing and a ride on the Polar Bear Express back to Cochrane.

"It wasn't *Survivor* or survival, but it was pretty remote and we actually didn't see anybody until we got to Moosenee - it certainly wasn't for amateurs," Finnie said, adding the trip was two years in the planning and training and all his wife asked was if his insurance was paid up.

## Acton auditioner

Acton's Jenn Johnson sang her heart out but wasn't one of the pop star wannabes who cried when they didn't make the cut at an open audition in Toronto last week for a new Global TV show - *Popstar* - about the lives of a new hot girl band.

"It was very exciting - it was like a media circus during my 15-second audition," Johnson said, adding she stood in line with 500 other girls before singing just 15 seconds of a Backstreet Boys song to three judges.

The number of girls who cried when they weren't chosen disturbed

Johnson.

"I knew it would be a billion girls in mini-skirts just waiting to be pop stars but it was a once-in-a-million shot at stardom and I thought, why not?" Johnson said.

Johnson, who sings with four other Acton musicians in the alternative band *Vivid*, when not working at Acton Meadows Golf Club, hopes the exposure in two Toronto newspapers and on CityTV, which aired her audition tape - will lead to Toronto jobs for their band.

A second round of auditions featuring 45 women from across Canada takes place in Toronto next month.

## Golden arches?

Ronald McDonald isn't talking, but there's a persistent rumour circulating that McDonalds could bring its golden arches to Acton.

McDonald's PR firm is "in the midst of handling" a request for a comment on the rumour, and while Dave Beatty, owner/operator of six McDonalds in Georgetown and Brampton, has no news, but he'd love to operate a store in Acton.

"It's a wonderful little town and I think it would be wonderful to put a pretty little store in there," Beatty said, who has a number of Acton employees at his Georgetown site, said McDonalds is developing smaller stores with 40-seats and a drive through - like a new one in Meaford.

## Home, finally for Susan

Good news from Acton's Susan Lindsay, who is back at home (with her husband in Guelph) after six months in an American research hospital, recovering from a rare brain fungus.

"I'm home. I'm in my own room. I have my own space - it's heaven," Susan said in a phone interview on Monday.

Healthwise, Susan said she's as well as can be expected and "touch wood" will only have to return to the Maryland hospital for monthly check-ups.

"Everyone has been super supportive. Thanks," Susan said.



**STAR SHOT:** Acton's Jenn Johnson took a stab at pop stardom last week, auditioning in Toronto for a new Global Television show about a hot girl band. Johnson (right) is a member of *Vivid*, an Acton band that includes Dave Shultz and James Metcalfe (top for left), Caleb Powell and Andrew Durham. She hopes publicity about the audition - her picture was in two Toronto newspapers and her 15-second audition was played on CityTV - will get *Vivid* some jobs. - Submitted photo

## Lush countryside carved from forest

It's a great time of year to take a trip through the countryside in this northern end of Halton. The fields are lush with corn and grain is being harvested as golden sheaves ripple in the sun. Mares, colts but their side, frolic in the light summer wind. Cattle are ruminating in pastures knee deep in grass.

It's a comfortable scene. Well developed farm land and comfortable homesteads with well fenced perimeters give a look of permanence. Yet only 150 years ago this part of Upper Canada, as Ontario was known, was a wilderness. Only a few settlers inhabited the area, clearing the tall pines to make room for crops between the huge stumps, which later with their roots, would be used for fences, some of which still exist.

Timber wolves, American elk (wapiti), Canadian lynx, marten, fisher and likely cougar and bears existed in the forests. All of these animals have long since migrated elsewhere. The elk and deer would have been a part of the pioneer diet, as would the wild turkey, which once pecked for food in the clearing.

Streams in the Credit watershed ran with Atlantic salmon, as evidenced by this reference to the Credit River in *The Canadian Gazetteer*, printed in 1846:

"... This river has long been celebrated for its salmon fishing, immense quantities having been annually taken, in the spring, during their passage up the stream to deposit their spawn. But for the great number of mills which have been erected on the river during the last four years, the fishing is destroyed, the salmon being unable to make their way over the dams."

Along with succulent salmon, settlers also found appetizing birds for pigeon pie. Flocks of passenger pigeons astounded the early settlers to the extent "they blackened out the sun." It would some-

## Coles' Slaw

with  
Hartley Coles



times take hours for a flock to pass. The valley of the Credit was right in the middle of the passenger pigeon nesting area. There are records of colonies of these migrating birds along Concession 1, Lot 28, near Acton, and also at Georgetown where large nesting ground were reported in the 1850s.

The last flocks of these pigeons were reported between 1850 and 1870. However, records also show a few birds also bred near Campbellville in 1886. The last birds reported in the Credit watershed were a flock of ten seen at Orangeville in 1899. Unlike salmon which have reappeared in the Credit and its tributaries, thanks to restocking, the passenger pigeon is now extinct.

But with so much other game in the township the pioneers probably never missed the plump pigeons. They faced many perils, not the least of which were bears who roamed through the woods and took a particular liking to the settlers' domesticated animals. A juicy porker or a lamb out of the fold were fair game for Herr Bruin.

Cougars, wolves and lynx also made life hazardous for Bessie and her calves.

Carnivorous animals as well as man also were able to dine on wild deer which were here in abundance. The white-tailed deer were never driven out of this area with the settling of the country as motorists will attest. Well protected except during the annual hunting season, the deer have increased in numbers. It is now not uncommon to see flocks of them

in the less inhabited parts of Esquimes and Nassagaweya, both townships swallowed up politically in regional government by Halton Hills and Milton.

Those first settlers who often came from countries where even the potato was scarce, must have appreciated the relative bounty of this part of Upper Canada. Once they built log cabins and were able to plant seed between the stumps and harvest their first crops they must have thought they were in the Garden of Eden, compared to their former existence as a crofter in Scotland, a tenant farmer in Ireland where English misrule was common, from the slums of London or the industrial cities of northern England.

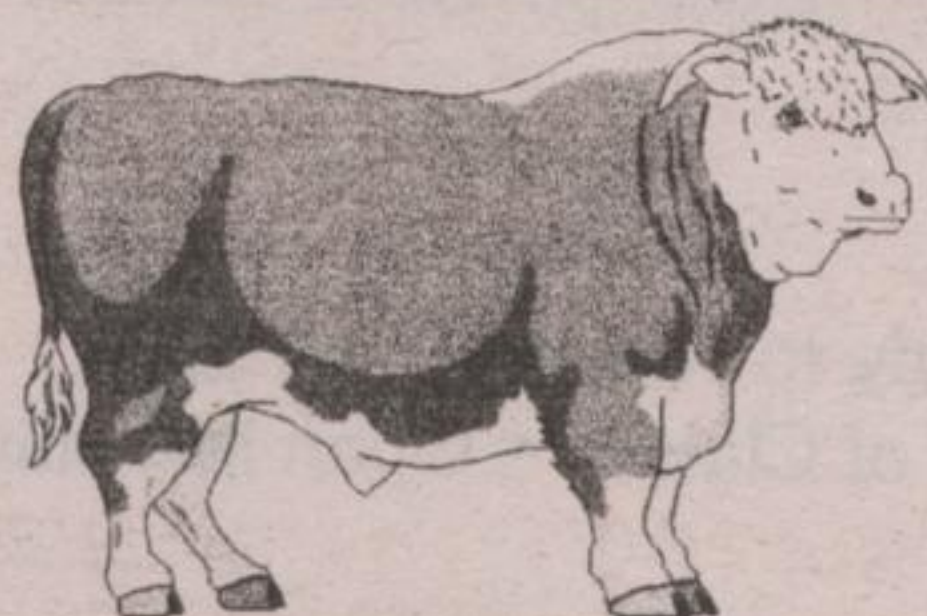
Of course, there were well-to-do settlers as well. They left the comfort of well established homes in the old country to try their fortune in the colonies. Some returned disenchanted with life in a country where the nearest neighbour might be miles down the road and even the minimum amenities were uncommon. Most stayed, however, carved homes of the wilderness and created dynasties, intermarrying with people of the same or similar stock. They created hamlets in the wilderness, which later grew to villages, towns and cities.

Cholera, smallpox and various other diseases took many of them before they left childhood. It wasn't uncommon for entire families to be wiped out in an epidemic. But the survivors continued to build on their successes, erecting schools and churches, improving their social life and the roads which were little better than trails when they settled on the land.

They've left their mark on Halton Hills in a number of ways but it is never more apparent than when their fields are lush and the cattle graze peacefully as they do now.



**SPEEDERS BEWARE:** Steve Grasby, left, and his assistant Thomas Bartolac tracked speeders with the Radar Message Board last weekend at the intersection of Kingham Road and Main Street south. Grasby is calling for traffic lights at the intersection. Highest speeds clocked were a 70 and three 69s. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo



## WHAT'S YOUR BEEF?

Put it in a letter to the Editor!

Deadline is Tuesday at noon.