



**ALL IN STEP:** Members of Acton High School's girl cadet corps paraded "all over Acton" following inspection on the first VE-Day. The girls looked smart in white blouses and dark skirts. The parade here is on Young St. with Ajax Engineers in the background, an area now housing Shoppers Drugs. Identified among the marchers are Frances (Chew) Marcoux, Shirley Ralston, Norma (Kentner) Marchment, Mary Smith, Irma (Kentner) Coles and Joyce Lamb.



**VE-DAY PARADE:** Acton Boys' Band led a VE-Day parade on May 7, 1945, following the Acton High School cadet inspection at Prospect Park. Reeve J.M. "Bud" McDonald, school secretary Billy Middleton and Principal A.C. Stewart preceded the band. Noted are Don "Weary" Lamb on bass, Julian Zajac on trombone and Ken Marchment with the snare drum.

## Whistles blew, bells rang, cadets paraded to mark first VE-DAY in Acton May 8, 1945

By Hartley Coles

Sixty years ago on May 8 the end of World War 2, a conflict reputed to have taken as many as 40 million lives, was officially declared. Celebrations of Victory in Europe Day (VE-Day) spontaneously erupted all over the country and the western world, including the then village of Acton and its 2,000 souls.

Actually the war had ended a few days earlier when the Canadian commander accepted the surrender of the German army in Holland. Field Marshall Montgomery, a Brit and Eisenhower's right bower, also accepted the German army's complete capitulation a day or so later. However, in view of the vast U.S. contribution to the success of the Allied forces and Eisenhower's leadership the official end had to wait until May 8 when the Americans could officially accept the surrender.

The confusion over the actual date of the surrender reached even to tiny Acton. Canadian Press, the news agency which fed The Acton

Free Press of the day with international news, either wired or cabled Free Press publisher and editor Arlof Dills that the war had ended at a specific time and date. Mr. Dills prepared a special pony-sized one page edition of The Acton Free Press which he and son Jim distributed to employees of Beardmore and Co. as they arrived for work before 7a.m.

The news was greeted with skepticism by the 500 or so workers who probably felt there was no way a small town community newspaper could break news which belonged to the big media. It took years before the truth came out and the paper was vindicated. This writer knows all this because he worked for The Free Press then.

When they finally declared the war was officially over the high school cadets were having their annual inspection at Prospect Park. While the Beardmore whistle blew and church bells pealed, the cadets, led by members of the Acton Boys' Band, paraded from the



**RIFLE DRILL:** Members of the Acton High School rifle drill squad perform during cadet inspection at Prospect Park in 1946, a year after VE-Day. Left to right are John Barr, George Elliott, Roy Kirkness, Aldo Braida, Bill Toth and Bob Bruce.

park through the downtown, over the CN tracks to Young St. and the edge of the village, returning by the same route.

Community officer of the cadets, now Bandmaster George Elliott, recalls the excitement of the war's end. He said the cadets, boys in uniform and with rifles, girls in white blouses and dark blue, black or tartan skirts, had finished their inspection and George was just going to

invite the inspecting officer to inspect the display when the whistle blew. The officer said, "What's that?" George replied: "I think, sir, that's the end of the war."

The officer said let us get the corps together and have a parade, a spontaneous reaction to the war's end. Jubilant villagers left everything to join the celebration.

"I think we were the first place in Canada to have a pa-

rade," George Elliott recalls. The mood was ecstatic. People were dancing with one another and slapping each other on the back.

Most employers let their employees leave for the day to join in the celebration. Canada had been in the war since September of 1939, almost six full years, and most families had sons and daughters in the armed forces, many of whom never returned.

Alas, this scribbler was unable to join in the festivities until the evening. Community newspapers of those days were also job print shops, printing almost every kind of printing. Mason Knit labels were being printed that day and as part of the press crew I couldn't leave until they were finished, the rollers washed and sticky blue ink rubbed from hands and arms.

The celebration went on without me and others on The Free Press staff. There was a parade in the afternoon led by the Boys' Band under the baton of the late Charlie Mason. There was a dance in the old town hall that night with Stew Elliot's Orchestra providing the music. There were parties "all over town."

It's difficult to describe the early mood of that day, part joyful, part relief, and some sorrow over those who would never come back. Nevertheless jubilation soon took over and more than a few people nursed hangovers the next day.

That was 60 years ago but for some of us it seems like only yesterday.



**FOOD FUNDS:** A one-time grant from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services will allow kitchen upgrades for the Food For Thought program at Robert Little School. Halton Food For Thought coordinator Gail Cruickshank (right) delivered a \$335, part of a \$5,335 grant, to school liaison Jacqueline Angood recently. - Submitted photo

## Region, hospitals to honour doctors in Appreciation Week

Halton Region and local hospitals are recognizing physicians for their contribution to the health and well-being of Halton residents during the third-annual Halton Physician Appreciation Week, May 16-20.

"Halton Physician Appreciation Week serves as a reminder of the valuable resource Halton's medical community is to residents, and gives the Region and our local hospitals an opportunity to thank our physicians for the excellent care they provide," says Halton Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline. "The quality and accessibility of our health care has far-reaching impacts in Halton, including our ability to attract industry and business, and to provide a healthy, sustainable community."

Currently, three of Halton's four local municipalities, Burlington, Halton Hills and Milton, are considered "under serviced" in

terms of patient-to-family physician ratio, which makes building - and maintaining - a sufficient physician base essential," Savoline noted.

Halton Region will host a physician networking event on May 19, and local hospitals will host morning coffee events featuring the mayors of their municipalities.

"It is important to recognize the doctors who practise in this community and who are committed to ensuring Halton residents receive quality health care," says Angela Sugden Praysner, Halton Region's Physician Recruitment Coordinator.

"Halton Region encourages Halton residents to let their doctors know how much they are respected and valued. We want our physicians to feel good about practising here, and to pass the word onto their colleagues that Halton is a world class community in which to practise medicine and live," says Praysner.