

THINGS WERE DIFFERENT in local grocery stores in the early part of the century. This is Hannant's grocery store.

Milton Then and Now

Hannant grocery store

By Mel Robinson

Over the years the people of Milton have been served well by many of the merchants who occupied stores on Main St. Some of them stand out in my mind more vividly, because our family dealt with them long enough to make them seem like old friends. Jack Hannant Senior, I remember quite well because I was in his store so often, and I can still remember him as one of the wardens at the Anglican Church.

He was a dynamic person with quick movements, an aggressive, decisive manner. His hair was flecked with gray and his red face betrayed an active interest in his customers, their wants, and their personal problems as he chatted with them at the service counter of his store.

He lived on Foster St. at the corner of Commercial in a home that was built for him in 1909 by John Bradley. The contract price of that fine home was \$2,750. When the job was almost finished Bradley dropped in to speak to him about the attic. No provision was in the contract for the flooring of that area.

"Jack," he said, "we are nearly finished, and you really should have a floor in that attic. If you do it now, I will provide the best of tongue and groove boards and lay them—all for \$25."

"Go ahead," was the quick reply. When Jack Hannant took over the grocery store that he operated for many years at 258 Main St., he was no novice as a merchandiser. At one time he had operated a hardware store at 260 Main St. East. That business was later operated by a series of other owners—George Storey, Mun. Nixon, George Dawson, Charles T. and Etna Day, Bob and Ed McKim, before it was purchased by Larry Schuyler who moved it to the Milton Plaza as a Home Hardware agency. Mr. Hannant was also associated for years with Jim Blain in the flour, feed and coal business.

One of the problems faced by him in his first year of business was to lay in a large supply of produce for the winter season. That was in the days before produce was brought in from other areas during the winter months. He obtained the use of a plot of land behind the Town Hall and planted potatoes there. Many mornings he was busy cultivating his patch until it was time to open the store. Much more was needed, of course. When winter set in there would be about 300 bags of potatoes stored in the basement of the store. Just before each weekend 30 or 40 pecks were measured out into brown paper bags—ready for sale. In

the basement was also stored a season's supply of turnips, cabbages and onions.

Those were the days before extensive pre-packaging at the food processor level, and before checkout counters and self-service. Hannant's was a service store in the truest sense of the word. Larger orders were usually taken by the driver of the delivery wagon—Chris Curry or later Pat Ford. Clerks packing these orders could always stop to give prompt counter service to customers who came in off the street.

The service counter was a cheerful place with customers and clerks chatting away as items were measured or weighed out and wrapped. Usually a clerk would have available a five or 10-pound bag of sugar which had been weighed out previously in spare time. If not she would scoop the sugar out of the big bag and weigh it out in a paper bag while the customer watched. She pulled down enough string from the ball in a holder above the counter. A few dexterous movements and the bag was tied and the string broken off.

Lard was weighed out in thin little wooden boats, and so was the luxury item, peanut butter. Dates, raisins, and currents were bagged, weighed and wrapped. Maple syrup was run off into a bottle from a tap in the drum. White wine and cider vinegar came in by the barrel and were run off into bottles, which were often brought in by the customers. A large cloth bag of dried beans was always convenient to the service counter. They were scooped out and bagged as required—as were dried peas. Tea came in large chests which were lined with lead paper and was weighed out as the customer waited. Coffee beans could be bought whole or the beans could be put through the convenient grinder.

There was a set of balance-type weigh scales on the counter—the tall balance and the weights in shining brass. Like most country stores there were chairs or stools for the convenience of customers. Mr. Hannant worked at the service counter himself with a clerk or two. Customers enjoyed prompt service and pleasant conversation. They left the store in a pleasant frame of mind.

I know that modern merchandising methods are essential to conduct the large volume of business done in modern chain stores, but as I wait patiently in line to be checked out, I wonder. I feel sure that the old-fashioned counter service was just about as fast for the average customer as it now is to find the items on a shopping list and have them checked out.

Around the Campfire

Burdock, an edible plant

By Rocco Losole

Edible Plant—Great Burdock (Arctium lappa)
The Great Burdock is widespread throughout North America. The sticky burrs of this plant are a common nuisance, and are usually found in groups of three on a long stalk. The flower heads are composed of many small flowers called florets, surrounded by bracts.

Bell-shaped disc florets form the centre of each head. Star-shaped ray florets extend out like petals and are sometimes bent back, from the centre. The sepals are reduced to a ring of hairs, scales or bristles called the pappus, on the mature fruit. The one-seeded fruit has a hard outer covering.

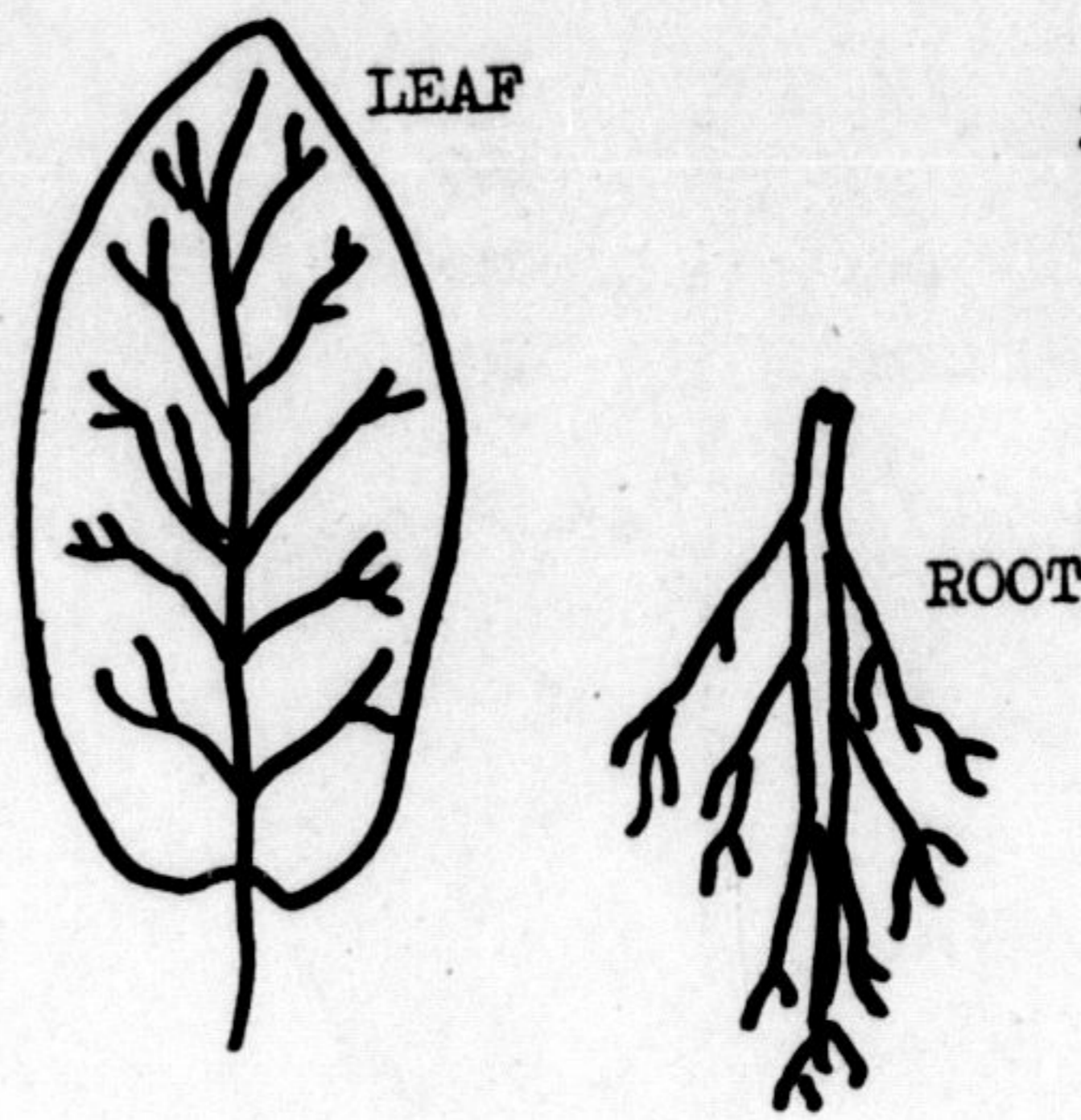
The large leaves are shaped like oblong hearts, and are rough, purplish, with prominent veins.

Preparation:

The early leaves may be boiled and served as greens. The flower stalk makes the best eating, but be sure to peel every bit of the bitter skin. The pith of the flower stalk has long been used in the making of candy. The peeled young leaf stalks are excellent raw or served in a salad with birch sap.

The first year roots are the mildest in taste and may be recognized because the biennials stemming from it have no flowers or burrs. Serve it sliced after boiling with salt for 20 minutes. Served in this manner, it makes an excellent pot-herb.

—Wayne Sim



Between the Willows

About 10 tons of teasel

By Don Byers

Last year a forest of teasel grew in the fields below the front terrace and around the north side of the house.

Now, of course, the tall weeds are brown, dry and very prickly.

"That's an awful sight, Don," observed Rhea as she peered out of the living room window.

"I'll get to it as soon as I can," I replied and within a day or so found myself busily pulling and piling the finest teasel crop in Halton County.

As I worked, I wondered, "Isn't it a shame there's no market for all this stuff?" The only use I have ever read about for the prickly plants was to raise the nap on woolen cloth, whatever that means.

While thus engaged my mind wandered back to other crops we have attempted to raise out here.

I recalled with a chuckle the year Rhea and Richard put in several rows of asparagus plants, each one, without exception, placed carefully in the ground UPSIDE-DOWN!

Ah, well.

We did much better with the strawberries, tomatoes, peas, beans and onions. I remember, however, the radishes were a bitter disappointment, the potatoes looked as if they had fought tenaciously for life only to lose in the end. And my pet project, a row of grape vines, slowly shrivelled and cried, as did the dwarf fruit trees.

We did take off a fair load of hay the years we owned the horse. The peevish Pinto always supervised the job, watching every move from his corral and whinnying instructions.

The Scotch Pines and N. Carolina Poplars were a huge success and now tower against the sky. And, of course, the Weeping Willows have become enormous, their thirsty roots fed by the spring near which they grow.

What little I know about gardening I learned from my late father.

During the Depression dad bought five acres of land on the Dixie Road west of Toronto.

Here we built a small, frame cottage. I don't know how much help I was, but I do recall spilling a gallon of sticky, black liquid asphalt all over the red roofing, leaving a permanent stain and a constant reminder of a moment of clumsiness.

Dad dug a well—most of it hacked inch-by-inch through hard, blue clay . . . and if that was not bad enough, when he finally struck water it was unusable. It tasted so strongly of lime even the neighboring cattle would not touch it.

We put most of the five acres in potatoes—although we also grew other table vegetables. I remember hoeing and hilling endless rows of spuds and getting up at 4 a.m. to dust the plants, still wet with dew, to ward off the voracious

Philosobits

By Edith Sharpe

I guess I was born in the wrong time. When I was young no one respected youth, now that I am older no one respects the aged.

A crooked tree does not straighten with age.

+ + +

Remember the "weekend", to keep it holy.

Potato Bugs

I also recall stoking the wood cook-stove in the tiny kitchen and the exotic aroma of toast done over the coals.

So much for the past.

But through putting these thoughts down I did discover a use for the teasel I am now harvesting.

It's great for scratching your memory.

Want some?

Sheridan has high enrolment

HALTON PEEL—A recent part-time enrolment report issued by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities shows Sheridan College with the highest student registration in the province as of February, 1978.

During the period from Nov. 1, 1977 up until Feb. 1, 1978, 16,823 part-time students were registered in credit and non-credit courses offered through the Community Services Division which provides studies in continuing education, retraining, and training and leadership development. The provincial total for all 22 community colleges was 136,780 for the same period.

—Sunday, May 14 is Mother's Day.

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