

Milton Then and Now

There were many fences

By Mel Robinson

Standing one day in the vestry of Grace Church, my attention was taken by a small painting of the original church. A noticeable feature in the foreground, at the street level, was a white picket fence. It started me thinking about the very common use of fences on town properties when I was a boy.

In the history of the church which the congregation produced in 1944 there is a reproduction of a photo of the same building from the same viewpoint as that of the painting. The pickets at the gate were tapered up to the two gate posts of the driveway. There was a typical wooden gate which, like the fence along the front of the property, was nicely painted.

The residential property to the right of the church also had a picket fence across the front. The fence between the two properties was of a less common type. Three planks about seven inches

wide ran horizontally between the posts.

In 1895 the present church building was opened and the old church had been moved back on the property to become the Parish Hall. A picture of the new church from the same viewpoint as that of the older one showed that the neighbors still had the picket fence across the front of their property and the three-plank one beside the church lane. The picket fence at the front of the church property had been removed.

I can remember a few high board fences from my boyhood days. These were made of upright planks, seven or eight inches wide, placed side by side. They had the appearance of a solid, drab-looking wall. I particularly remember the one facing Robert St. along the property of the two Misses Ford. I got over it early one Halloween with a wooden pole which would slide through one of the knot holes. It was getting dark when my sister came

along the street, and the pole made quite a clatter as I pushed it out across the walk in front of her. She was quite upset, and so was I at the special reception my father staged for me later in the evening.

The fairgrounds had a high board fence along Robert St. and a gate at the west end for admitting those on foot, those with horse and buggy, and the occasional motorist. There was also a board fence along Thomas St. to prevent free admission on fair days and to ball games. Youngsters, of course, found it relatively easy to get around this problem.

In one severe winter Margaret Maxted recalls that the snow piled high on Thomas St. to the east of that fence. Children in the area enjoyed building forts, etc., but it was not much fun for those in vehicles.

The most common fencing in town was the woven wire fence. Horizontal strands were about six inches apart and the vertical ones about 12 inches. On Robert St. we had this type of fencing along the sides of our lot and across the back, but no fence across the front. This was the most common type of fencing of town properties around the time of World War I.

It did nothing to discourage cats, dogs, squirrels or rabbits. Small boys went over it, under it, and through it. The lawn mowers of those days could not cut close, so fences were fringed

with long grass and weeds. If the occasional horse or cow strayed out on the street, however, it seemed to stay on the roadway rather than trample through lawns and gardens.

There was considerable home building in town from 1911 to 1913. The year 1912 was a real boom year. As new homes went up there was a great demand for fencing. Mun. E. Nixon had a hardware business at 260 Main St. In late spring and early summer each year he advertised Frost Wire Fencing which was made in Hamilton. He offered his fencing customers the loan of screw jacks and fence stretchers. He also had to run frequent ads) requesting those who had not returned these equipment items to do so at once, as other customers needed them.

The most elaborate fence in town that I can remember was that of Knox Presbyterian Church. Fencing, gates and posts were all of ornamental iron—green in color if my memory serves me correctly.

It is sad to relate that vandalism, while not common, could occur in those days too. In October 1913 damage was done to this fence by someone who pounded the metal pickets with a large rock, and at least nine holes were put in church windows by stones. In November more damage was done to the 10 foot stretch of fence, and more windows were broken. It was wondered if a lunatic was at large in the town.

Omagh

Quilting party planned

By Mrs. Cecil Patterson
The July meeting of the Omagh Presbyterian WA and WMS was held on Thursday, July 5 in the form of a picnic on the lawn at the home of Mrs. Henry Vanderdeelen, Britannia Road.

Mrs. J.C. Marshall opened the WA with a prayer followed by singing a hymn. The scripture and prayer were given by the hostess. Letters of thanks were read from Mrs. Betty Vivian, Mrs. T. Luke, Mrs. Stouff, Mrs. John Hilson, Mrs. Jean Douglas, Mrs. T. Snow, Mrs. W. McFadden.

Mrs. Mulligan gave the financial account, reporting that the Save the Children Fund for the adopted child in Hong Kong had been paid. A shower is planned for a September bride-to-be. This will be at Boyne Centre on Sept. 6 and community and church friends are invited. It was announced that the induction for Rev. Stanley Welch, will be held in Omagh church.

Mrs. C. Patterson, president of the WMS welcomed the members and thanked the hostess. Mrs. Colin Marshall was secretary and read the minutes for May and June meetings. Mrs. Rutherford read from the Daily Bread and all repeated the Mary Stewart prayer.

It was a pleasure to welcome Mrs. T. Snow to the meeting and she kindly donated two quilt tops to the WMS. It was decided to hold a quilting party and pot luck dinner in the church hall on Aug. 26 at 10 a.m.

The president reported attending an executive meeting to arrange for the Area 2 Fall Rally to be held Oct. 10 at 7:30 p.m. in Omagh church. Thirteen ladies answered the roll call word, gather, and all were pleased to learn that Mrs. F. Jeffcott and William McFadden are improving following surgery.

Rev. William Milligan joined the group, bringing every lady a gift of flowers and he closed the meeting with prayer

and benediction. Games were enjoyed while the buffet lunch was prepared. Mr. Milligan left for Ireland on Thursday evening for a holiday in his native land and to participate in the parade of LOL on July 12. We wish him a safe and happy trip.

Welcome to Mr. and Mrs. Massa and three children to their new home on the Fourth Line. They moved from Downsview.

The fine steel shed on the corner of Fourth Line and Main St. was destroyed by fire on Saturday evening. There were several grain wagons, implements and other equipment in the building and quite a loss to their owner. Cause of the blaze is not known.

The Canadian Pacific Railroad is preparing the tracks for the GO train to start in 1980. Gangs of 20 or more workmen have been busy in the area from Milton to Fifth Line. Work trains and long freight trains are causing much confusion and frustration to traffic by

being stopped on the crossings. Belated birthday greetings and get well wishes to William McFadden, who is a patient in Burlington Hospital.

We are pleased to report that Mr. and Mrs. Bill Lockie and family of RR 2, Gorrrie have moved back into their farm home after renovations and repairs were completed following an early morning fire some weeks ago.

Teachers appointed

Halton Board of Education appointed new teachers to Milton schools.

Lorna Griffiths is taking a teaching position at Milton High School.

On the elementary level Deborah Veales will be at W.I. Dick school, Suzanne Oliver at Fairview, Marily Noble at Robert Baldwin and Leanne Case at Brookville.

Between the Willows

Shipboard saga

By Don Byers

I have no idea why summertime seems to engulf me in waves of nostalgia. But, invariably, it does.

For no explainable reason, I got to thinking today, about my Air Force mates and me when we shipped overseas during World War II.

It was cool, overcast day in April as we filed up the boarding ramp of HMS Franconia, docked in Halifax Harbor. We were wearing our light blue greatcoats, and were loaded down with luggage.

As I took my last step from my Canadian homeland, which I was not to see again for a year or more, a sea gull, soaring overhead, scored a direct hit on my left shoulder. At the time, I wasn't sure if this was a good omen or bad.

Before being pressed into service, the Franconia had been a cruise ship. To accommodate the small harbors, which had often been her destination, she was not really a large ship—only 30,000 tons.

Painted navy grey, she had been refitted for her present job. This included a huge gun, mounted on the stern, and several anti-aircraft installations amidships, port and starboard.

The passenger list included our draft of about 400 Air Force officers and a small number of civilians.

We were bunked down in several large cabins in the stern, instructed on how to use our life preservers, and all about boat drill. This done, we were left on our own to explore the ship. Later, we enjoyed a superb meal in the dining lounge, and shortly afterwards, turned in for the night.

When we hit the deck next morning, we were at sea. Sailing ahead of us was the much larger HMS Britannia. Our escort consisted of two Corvettes, and, overhead, a flight of ancient Swordfish bi-planes, carrying torpedos.

We headed south and within a couple of days, sighted an American convoy. A US frigate, pitching and rolling in the swell, headed towards us.

We lined the rail and watched, while an officer aboard her attempted to fire a package, at the end of a long, nylon line, to the Franconia. Presumably, these were our sailing orders.

Our ship maneuvered into the centre of the convoy, as did the Britannia. To

the starboard, sailed the huge America, the largest US troop ship on the seas.

It is almost impossible to describe the size of convoy—there were ships in every direction, stretching to the horizon. Every conceivable shape and size. We were to become accustomed to this awe-inspiring sight for the next two weeks. Life aboard the Franconia was deceptive—it was almost hard to believe there was a war going on. While we did not enjoy all the amenities of pre-war passengers, we did consume delicious meals, four times a day. And as the convoy sailed into the South Atlantic, we took in the warm sun, lounging in deck chairs, played deck tennis, shuffleboard and bean-bags. Schools of performing porpoise gleefully followed our course, entertaining us with their antics.

Naturally, none of us knew exactly where we were, or what our destination really was. This, however, didn't stop us from speculating like mad.

On about Day 12, we realized, the weather became sullen and cool.

Day 14 dawned, and we were informed that our "Deep Sea" luggage in the hold, would be shipped on when we docked. Arrangements were made for us to go below and remove any articles we might need, during the first week or so ashore.

While we were down there, doing our thing, we were suddenly shaken up by loud, weird, clanging sounds coming from the outer shell of the ship.

We raced topside in time to see a patrol ship between the Franconia and the Britannia dropping depth-charges which hurl geysers of water high into the air. As usual, nobody told us what the hell was going on.

Next morning, we arrived at the harbor of Liverpool. The water was so choppy the ship could not dock. We were taken off by tender. During this process, one poor guy dropped his suitcase and watched—helplessly—as it floated away.

Ashore, we were loaded onto lorries, and driven through the bomb-ravaged streets to a railway station.

Our pleasurable voyage was over. And for us, the war was on again.



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