

Assembling pages of our past

from DOCUMENTING on page 18 where they came from, and how these places got their names.

In the course of his research, he started collecting photos and memorabilia as well.

"In 1973, I worked at General Fireproofing in Georgetown," grins Mr. McDonald. "I had brought home one of their five drawer filing cabinets to assemble my files. It was nearly full." In 1974 he was approached by *Acton Free Press* editor Hartley Coles to write a regular feature.

The resulting full page features ran every other week, and were entitled *Halton Sketches*. They paved the way for Mr. McDonald's first book of the same name, which was released in October of 1976.

Mr. McDonald learned there hadn't been much history assembled from the Halton area. The 1877 Halton County atlas was a county-wide publication, and Halton's Pages of the Past, written by Gwendolyn Clark in 1955, was published by Dills Printing, then owners of *The Canadian Champion* and *Acton Free Press*. It had been assembled in the same manner, originating from articles run in the Milton and Acton newspapers.

Halton Sketches was in print for about four years, sold locally by the Dills Printing Company, through its newspaper offices.

"By 1980, the original was out of print," continued Mr. McDonald. "I did receive the occasional call or letter from people wanting to track down a copy. And for about eight years, Norman Holt of Oxbow Books kept asking me to have it re-published."

But Mr. McDonald decided to wait until the 20th anniversary of the launch of his *Halton Sketches* to rewrite and update the original to include more recent history.

The result, *Halton Sketches Revisited*, this time published by Moxlin Publishing of Norval, will be launched, 20 years later, in the same building as the original, the Gallery of Halton Hills Cultural Centre, Thursday Sept. 5, from 6-8 p.m.

"A lot has happened in that 20 years," said Mr. McDonald. "It was history that had to be told."

A lot had happened to Mr. McDonald in that 20 years as well. After a stint on Halton Hills council, he moved from Georgetown to Milton, and for the past 17 years has worked for a cigarette company, currently as director of public affairs.

In addition to documenting 20 more years of history, Mr. McDonald enlisted the help of local residents to proofread his new sketches, updating the places' locations, giving both old and new names to roads and sideroads.

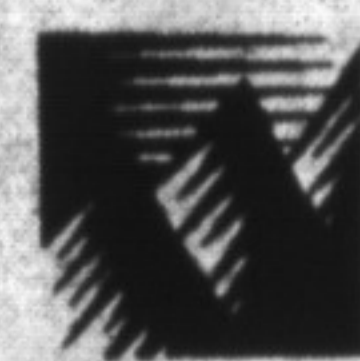
The result is 15 new chapters of updates and new stories. The 1996 edition has 125 pages, compared with the original's 100, printed in a soft back version with additional photos and maps. The cost will be \$16.95.

Since Mr. McDonald has finally given in to Norman Holt's longstanding request to have the book reprinted, he will also be at Oxbow Books in Georgetown on Saturday, Sept. 7, at 2 p.m. to autograph copies of the book.

So where does John McDonald go from here? "I'm working on a new project," he says John. "And it still goes back to Dolly Varden, or at least my fascination with names."

"Take a look in your kitchen cupboard. Who was J. L. Kraft? Who were Proctor and Gamble? Or how about Johnson and Johnson? I'm already researching history on those names to add to my collection."

"Who knows? It might turn into another book."



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