



Bill Cranston and wife Viola

Recognized for "outstanding accomplishments in the fields of publishing, industry, tourism and archaeology, culminating in the creation of the Huronia Museum"

Midland's Bill Cranston

Awards mark tribute to outstanding citizen

by Shirley Whittington
The study of the Cranston home on Midland's Cornell Drive is dominated by a huge window which overlooks Little Lake. That's significant, for it was the beauty of Little Lake and the surrounding area that first brought Herbert Cranston and his son Bill to Midland in 1935.

They came to buy a newspaper. They stayed, and quite simply, helped put Midland on the map. Today, thousands of tourists flock here annually, drawn by outstanding historical sites and museums which Bill Cranston had a direct hand in establishing.

Meanwhile, Midland's economy hums along on a varied industrial base that the Cranstons helped to initiate.
The '30's were lean years for Midland. The shipyards were closed. A third of the town was in bankruptcy. Herbert Cranston bought the small and struggling weekly paper, and appointed his son Bill, as manager. At that time Herbert Cranston noted,

"I was conscious that we had become custodians of a public trust."
The walls of Bill Cranston's study tell how seriously he felt about that sense of public trust. Hung between the wide window and the well-ordered bookshelves is an almost bewildering profusion of memorabilia. There are framed citations, photographs (including Sir John A. MacDonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who hang cheek-to-cheek), a C.W. Jeffrey's drawing of the martyrdom of Brebeuf and Lalemant, a framed piece of wood from the original pallisade at Ste Marie.

The distinctive shape of Ontario's official historical site marker is familiar to everyone, and it's a bit of a surprise to see one hanging on Bill Cranston's wall. It's a personal tribute to Cranston from the Ontario government, commending him for his efforts at the preservation of local history.

"I'm the only living Canadian to have a historical marker presented to him," says

Bill, with a smile.

He earned it. For 22 years he was Chairman of the Ontario Archeological and Historical Sites Board. He was Chairman of the Huronia Historical Development Council during the reconstruction of Sainte Marie, the Military and Naval Establishments at Penetanguishene and the Museum of the Upper Lakes at Wasaga Beach.

He has been Chairman of the Dominion Provincial Conference of Historical Resource Development, Secretary of the Huronia Historic Sites and Tourist Association (of which group he's now honorary life President) and he was a Director of the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

Recent history comes alive in the Huronia Museum, which was founded by Bill Cranston and his father. Originally located in the historic Playfair home overlooking Georgian Bay, the museum's precious contents were later moved to a new building in Little Lake Park. Recently the Gallery of Historic Huronia was added, which includes an interpretive look at human and natural history, and an art gallery for well-known Canadian artists and etchers.

But, history is more than the cherishing of the past. It also involves the contemporary economic and social fibre of a community.

Bill Cranston has been actively involved in the day to day life of Huronia too.

His small weekly newspaper grew to encompass the Penetanguishene Herald and the Midland Argus. With Bill Cranston as editor and publisher, the Midland Free Press Herald became bi-weekly, and between 1947 and 1957, was one of Canada's outstanding papers. There's a huge silver trophy in the Cranston den that attests to this. "We won that trophy so consistently," says Bill Cranston, "that they finally gave it to us, to keep."

Through their newspaper, the Cranstons began their campaign to make Midland more than a one-industry town. The shipyards opened, but only briefly, and with the support of local businessmen and local funding, an active search for new industries was begun.

Geln Mawr Frocks (now Fabulous Formal) moved up from Toronto, and the establishment of Fine Silk Mills (now Bay Mills), Ernst Leitz, Bausch and Lomb and Furnitex created new employment opportunities.

When Bill Cranston became President of Shoe Corporation of Canada, and Vice-President of Shoe Corporation of America, he sold his publishing interests to an employee group headed by J.R. Chittick, Wils Harrison and James Lennox.

Personal tours of prospective industrial sites were an important part of area promotion, and during one of these

excursions, Bill Cranston narrowly escaped death in an auto accident which left him with his neck broken in three places.

"I went through a series of operations," he says, "in an attempt, through wiring up the errant discs to extend my life expectancy. At that time, Dr. R. I. Harris of Toronto and Go-Home Bay, gave me a maximum of 25 years to live. I'm now three years over the limit."

That serious accident didn't dim his ambition or energy. He bounced back quickly and plunged into his activities promoting Huronia for the tourist and the industrialist.

Cranston feels strongly that both sides of development are inter-linked. He recalls that Sidney Caplan was first attracted to this area for the development of Penetang's Fern Shoe Corporation and Midland Footwear because of his cruiser in Honey Harbour. "The more recent similar industrial parallel," says Cranston, "is that of Robert Hartog's Kindred Industries Limited in 1962. The selection of a Midland site for his own plant and his own home was influenced in a significant degree by the fact that he loves boating and Midland is on the Georgian Bay."

As Secretary Treasurer of the Georgian Bay Development Association, Cranston, along with Manager Neville Keefe continued to help recruit new industrial and tourist developments.

He was a member of the Economic Council, and later Chairman of that council, as well as vice-president of the Ontario Regional Development Council.

He began the Hillsdale Conservation Farm. As assistant to Hon. James Auld, he recommended the site for the Ontario Science Centre. He's a trustee of the McMaster Divinity College, in Hamilton. (He himself graduated from McMaster in 1935.)

He has logged a good many miles in order to represent his province and his country at memorial unveilings across the world.

It is no surprise to find out that he was one of those Canadians honoured with a Centennial medal.

In 1975 Trent University awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Laws for his contribution to the historical development of Huronia and the province. (His father, Herbert Cranston, was similarly honoured in 1949, by McMaster University.)

Two of his books have been published by Ryerson. One is *Ink on My Fingers*, his edited collection of his father's memoirs in journalism. *Country Parson* is the second. This year, he published a book on the history of Port Severn.

All health has forced him to resign from active involvement in the life of the Huronia he loves, but he's still contributing.

His latest project is an audio-visual presentation on C.W. Jeffreys, the

artist who brought Canadian history to life. "This is an hour long show," he told me, "that will tell Jeffrey's story. We'll use it in our museum, and it will be shown on cable television here and around the Georgian Bay area."

He has a prodigious mental file of meetings and events that have proven to be milestones in local history. When a date eludes him, or a name, his wife Viola fills the gap. "I'm a rare bird," she says impishly. "I was born and educated in Midland."

As Viola Wheeler, she sang in the choir of Calvary Baptist Church when Bill Cranston first came to Midland. "I walked her home," says Bill. They married and she's been cheerfully at his side ever since, taking an active interest in his activities, particularly those relating to the Huronia Museum.

When Bill Cranston was Deputy Reeve of Midland in 1956, he instigated a municipal award of merit. "At that time," he says "I never thought I'd get one!"

On August 20th, he did, and it's on the wall along with all the other memorabilia. It pays tribute to his "outstanding accomplishment in the fields of publishing, industry, tourism and archaeology, culminating in the creation of the Huronia Museum."

It's only one, among many tributes, but somehow one gets the feeling that it is the closest to his heart.

Ontario property taxation

Changes worry many residents

by Chris Knowles
Staff reporter
The Ontario government is considering changes in property taxation that has many people worried. The reforms, outlined in the last provincial budget and presently being reviewed by a government commission, call for the implementation of property tax based on the market value of the land and buildings.

The last assessment on Midland properties took place in the late 1950's and properties have been taxed at this value ever since. Under the new proposals the assessment office, which is kept up to date on real estate values from information on every property sale received from the registry office, will determine the market value of each property. This figure will represent the value of the property on the real estate market. An example is a residence worth \$40,000 is now assessed at the 1950 value, anywhere between \$5,000 and \$15,000. If the new system is adopted the residence will be taxed at the present value.

Collectively, residences in Ontario now carry about one half the total burden of property taxation. To reduce this, it is proposed that residences be taxed at 50 per cent of market value while other properties are taxed at 100 per cent of their market value.

Church to use school facilities
At a meeting of Simcoe County Board of Education last week a motion was passed to allow The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to use the facilities at Parkview School for its Sunday services.
"This is not unusual to allow churches to use schools on weekends," said Midland trustee John McCullough.

Commissioner Bruce Frazer, at the Simcoe County Assessment Office, says from reassessments done recently at market value about 60 per cent of property experienced no change. "The assessment will go way up," explains Mr. Frazer, "but because a town only needs so much money, the mill rate will go down accordingly."

Vacant land, golf courses, lodges, clubs and conservation authorities would be taxed at 100 per cent of their market value and will no longer be defined as residential property.

"Golf clubs and lodges may be compelled to sell out to developers," says reeve Moreland Lynn, "as their taxes are increased perhaps as much as ten times in some cases."

The Ontario Golf Association has presented a brief to the Commission stating that the fee increase necessary to cover these increased taxes could vary from \$75 to \$400 per member and for public courses, from 75c to \$5 per round.

Also worried are farmers. Farmland, farm buildings and managed forests will be taxed at 100 per cent of market. The

farmer will only pay a 50 per cent of market value tax on his residence, value and the taxes will be paid by the province. However, the province will be able to recover ten years of paid back taxes they paid if the farmer changes the use of the land in order to discourage the farmer from selling to developers.

The single rate of 50 per cent for business assessment will replace the current rates of 25 per cent for carparks, 30 per cent for retail stores, 50 per cent for professional offices and retail chains, 60 per cent for industry, 75 per cent for financial and wholesale businesses

and 140 per cent for distilleries.

Government property would, under the proposals, be taxed for the first time. Establishments such as the Mental Health Centre in Penetanguishene would be subject to payments in lieu of taxes equal to full taxes at 100 per cent of market value.

The present practice of levying different mill rates on residential and commercial properties would discontinue. Presently the commercial industrial mill rate is 15 per cent higher than the residential mill rate.

If passed into law by the government, market

value assessment will begin in 1978. Re-assessments will take place every two years.

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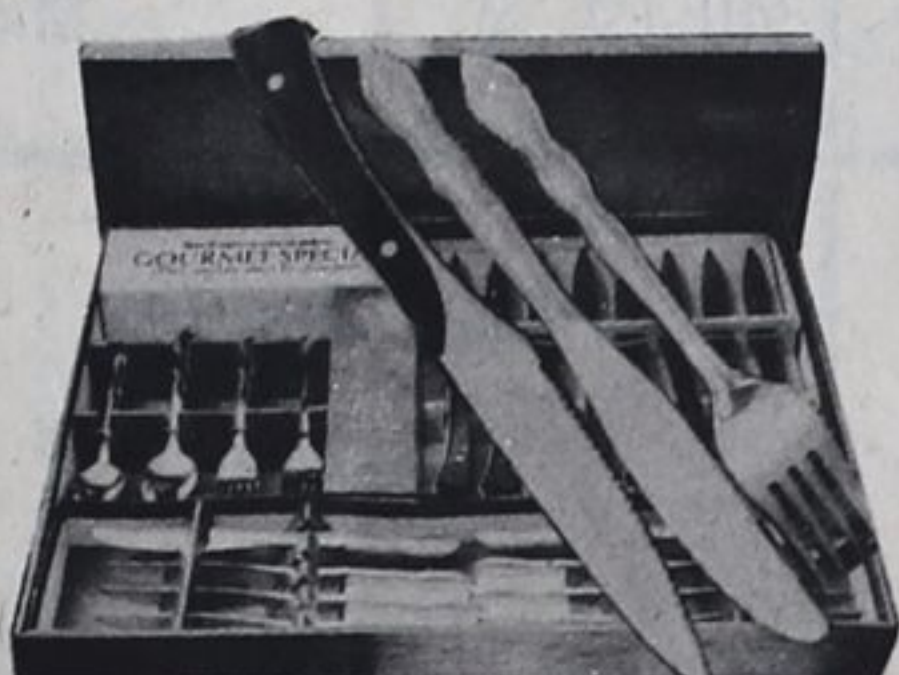
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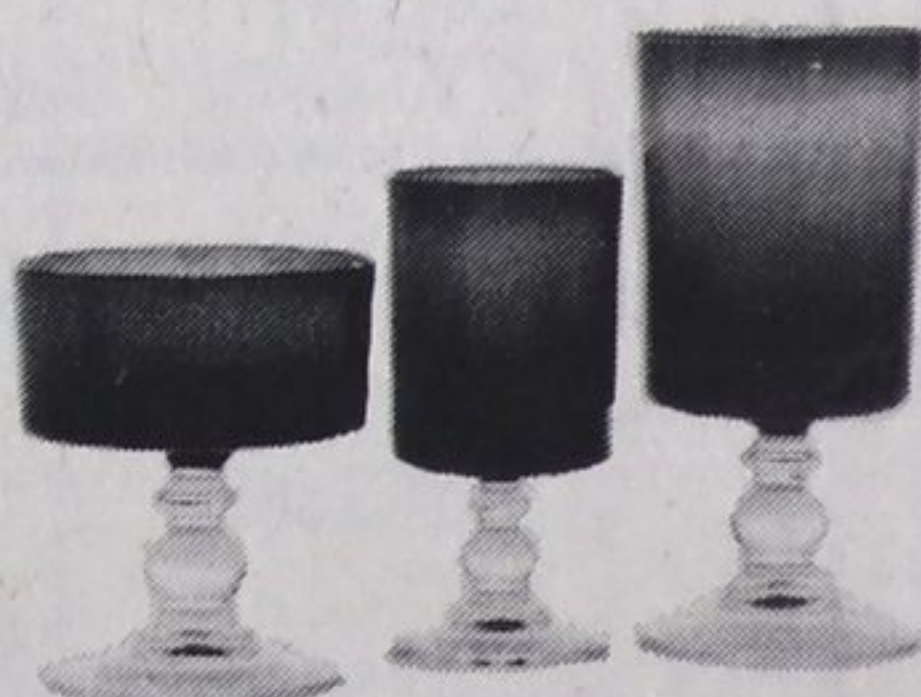
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