

Spills and thrills

92 canoeists in modern-day Shonnecti

by Murray Moore

They stood out among the dozens of canoeists standing and sitting in the sun in the parking lot between Midland's curling club and arena Saturday morning.

The parking lot was the assembly point for the first Shonnecti, organized by the staff of Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, and the Friends of Sainte-Marie.

Shonnecti was a portage of canoes down Midland's main street to the harbour, and then on by water to Sainte-Marie Park next to Sainte-Marie among the Hurons.

Many of the 92 canoeists got into the spirit of the novel event by dressing after a fashion like the voyageurs who paddled the waters and rivers of this area in the 1600s, whose lives were being symbolically recognized and hailed three centuries later.

But one group standing in the parking lot Saturday morning didn't resemble, they looked, like the real thing. They wore great floppy hats or had a few feathers in their hair.

They wore leather breeches or leggings.

Through their belts were stuck wicked looking knives and tomahawks. Hand-made muskets rested in the crooks of their arms as they stood and quietly talked and watched canoeists and other normal people watch them and take their picture.

They were members of the newly formed

Ontario Corps of the Coureur de Bois.

In their everyday lives they are school teachers, office workers, factory workers. But not Saturday.

Awards

Sainte-Marie manager Bill Byrick, when handing out awards in the afternoon, mentioned the coureur de bois as he prepared to announce the names of the winners of the award for best costume.

The coureur de bois were not considered for the award at their own request, he said. "They don't consider that they are wearing costumes," Byrick told the large crowd gathered in Sainte-Marie Park.

The Ontario Corp of the Coureur de Bois came into existence last September in Woodstock, Ontario. It grew out of a buffalo barbecue and black powder shoot that has been an annual event in the southwestern Ontario city for some years.

These coureurs de bois are not, like their namesakes, misfits and loners. Executive member and confessed president Doug Green, a welder from Woodstock, explained that the group has 32 members and that the only qualification to join is an interest and willingness to learn.

Green was not quick to admit he was the president. The original coureurs de bois were

loners who would only band together for a specific purpose, such as bartering for a large number of furs, he said.

These woods runners are organized, with an executive and a calendar of events running into next summer. But the executive proposes and the members dispose, Green explained. If everyone agrees to a plan of action, they do it.

If a majority want to do something, they do it, too, but others don't have to join in, true to the maverick spirit of those men whose lives and ways they copy so carefully.

Instructor

Gino Ferri, a wilderness survival instructor at Humber College and another member of the executive, gave reasons why the coureur de bois were anathema to the settlers, church and state of their time.

Farmers hated them because they lost their sons to the woodsmen. The Jesuits disapproved because they were trying to Christianize the natives and the coureur de bois abandoned their background and lived and worshipped as did the Indians. Government had no love for the coureur de bois because he was an unlicensed trapper from whom the government got no money.

Green and Ferri and their fellows admire the coureur de bois for his ability to survive in the bush, and his facility with a primitive

rifle.

"When people think of survival, they think negatively," said Ferri. The Ontario corp teaches itself basic survival skills, such as starting a fire without matches, how to make a working lean-to, how to tan hides.

Food source

Ferri feels that the people of Ontario today are unhealthily "removed from reality from their food source.

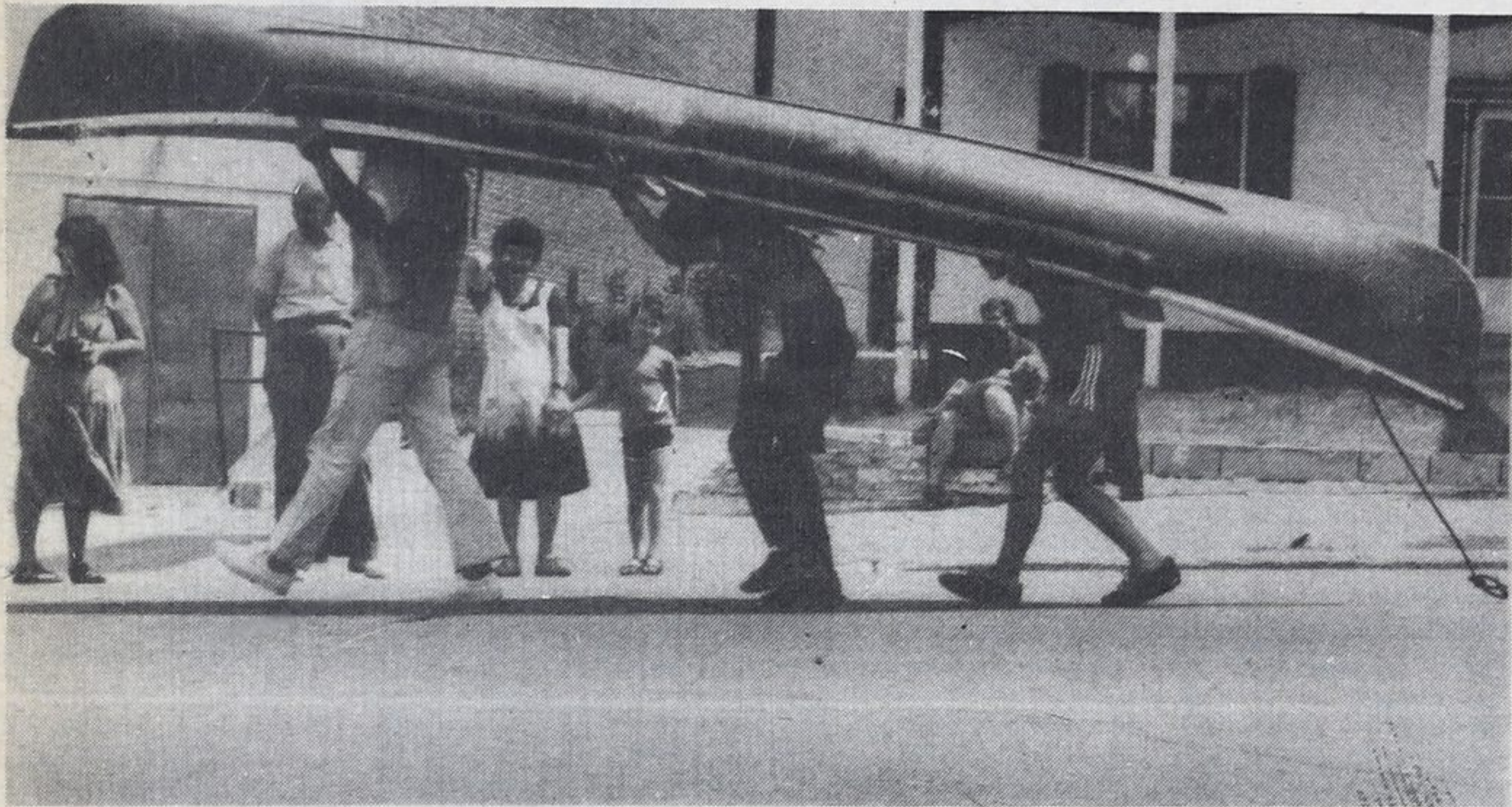
"If someone goes into a store and sees a chicken, they say let's go down to Kentucky Fried Chicken.

"If I had a live chicken and said let's prepare and eat it, they'd say I was crazy."

Ferri is a true conservationist. When the coureur de bois shoot a deer, he said, everything is used: intestines, sinews. "There's no waste. People use a cup, throw it away. They use a car that's out of style, they throw it away."

Their goal is to be able to live off the land, Ferri said they will seek official recognition of their group as being expert in search and rescue.

Another objective is to go into schools and teach survival skills to children once the coureur de bois themselves have mastered the skills that kept their namesakes alive in a younger, wilder country.



Midland council briefs

Mike Asselin's death a loss: Mayor Lynn

The memory of the late Michael Asselin, former clerk and reeve of Tiny Township, was recalled Monday night at a regular Midland council meeting.

Mayor Moreland Lynn said Asselin's recent death "was a real loss to the history of this area.

Late August opening

It was noted Fabulous Formal's new facility in the town's industrial park could be open by late August or early September.

Mayor Lynn hopes council will hold an "officially opening" of the industrial park at the time. Bell Canada has already established a new complex in the same park.

Surprise visitor

When William Davis, premier of Ontario arrived in Midland, Friday, to take part in official opening ceremonies at Goman Boat Ltd., and later christened one of the sailboats the company had made, a surprise visitor tagged along with the premier.

Mayor Lynn said Monday night he was pleased and surprised that Ontario Treasurer Frank Miller visited Midland with the

premier during the Friday afternoon affair.

Committee praised

The town's technical committee was praised for its efforts in preparing a draft agreement.

As a result of the draft a bylaw will be prepared concerning the construction and funding of a trunk sewer to the Highland Motel.

The motel will be asked to put up the money for the cost of constructing the sewer line which the town will repay, in part, as the motel's expansion program comes on stream.

Bouquet for merchants

Midland merchants came in for some praise after the mayor commenting on the increase in tourists who have been visiting Midland and area.

He cited the "receptive attitude" of shopkeepers who have been making tourists feel welcome to town in reminding his colleagues of Midland's three-day sidewalk sale which starts tomorrow.

He also noted that attendance at local and area tourist attractions and historical sites

are up this year.

Accounts

Some \$1,285,276.09 in accounts for the month of June were approved; \$815,000 of that amount going to the school boards.

Coverage, poor?

Alderman Jack Gerow, armed with a copy of the Financial Post wondered why Midland Chamber of Commerce wasn't represented in advertising that appeared in the paper.

However he was quick to point out that the Financial Times had recently carried a considerable account of Leitz Canada.

The mayor said he had no idea why there was no reference to Midland in the Post.

West Ward-East Ward, all about the town

As a result of a motion spear-headed by Alderman Richard Platt the necessary bylaw is to be prepared designating the former wards 1 and 2 as the West Ward and Wards 3 and 4 as the East Ward in anticipation of this fall's municipal elections which will see three alderman ejected in West Ward and three in East Ward along with the mayor, reeve and

deputy-reeve who will be elected at large.

Building permits on rise

To date 95 building permits have been issued this year for construction in Midland valued at \$3,087,095.

This compares with 92 permits that were issued at the same time last year for construction valued at \$1,030,150.

Tag day(s) okayed

Council gave the green light to the local Block Parents group to hold a tag day on both Friday, Sept. 12 and Saturday, Sept. 13.

Just a rumour

It appears members and those associated with Midland's Aid Cadets are concerned that maybe the cadets will be asked to vacate the Yonge Street civic centre where they meet each week.

Council, Monday night, said there were often rumours about the place but that there was no intention to oust the cadets.

Their concerns and a letter from Simcoe North MP Doug Lewis supporting the cadets will be turned over to the civic centre board.