



Picture from Penetanguishene's past

Here's a picture out of Penetanguishene's past. It shows the P. Payette Company Foundry and its employees. Peter Payette,

millwright and engineer, was born in 1850 and moved to Simcoe County in 1877. In 1880 he established himself in Penetanguishene

where he founded a machine shop and foundry. Have you a picture from the past you'd like us to publish? Please contact the

editor. All pictures will be returned upon publication.

A temperate home away from home

Shirley Whittington

A short time ago, an exclusive women's club in Toronto burned down.

Twenty-One McGill offered rest and recreation, food and drink to its well heeled members, nearly all of whom were working women. Margaret Atwood, the celebrated poet was a member at Twenty One McGill, as were many other influential Canadian women.

Just behind the burned-out Twenty One McGill there's a women's club of a different sort, although it also caters to working women.

Willard Hall shelters more than a hundred young women. They pay \$60 a week for their accommodation which includes two meals a day.

Willard Hall projects the sombre tone of the varnished women's residences of past decades. The stairs creak. There is no television or stereo. The front desk is an imposing bastion of polished oak, behind which are stationed older women with neat

grey hair and shiny spectacles.

They are kindly but firm about the rules at Willard Hall: no smoking, no drinking, no men.

The rules do not surprise. Willard Hall is operated under the aegis of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. It was built in the early twenties. "When the Exhibition was on," explained one desk lady, "women often had to come into the city and there was just no respectable place where a decent woman could stay if she was alone. And that's why Willard Hall came into being."

She added that it is used frequently by those who come to town to visit ailing relatives. "Willard Hall," she said, "is within walking distance of four major hospitals."

It is also within walking distance of the Eaton Centre, several porno movie houses, countless pinball arcades and the city's most famous gay bar.

Yet, with those oaken hallways, one feels removed from the present. So dated are the

formally furnished reception rooms, the apple green washrooms with wooden toilet stalls and claw footed bathtubs, the halls hung with framed photos of heavy bosomed WCTU matrons — that it is a shock to see a contemporary miss saunter by in jeans and orlon slippers.

There are surprises. The water fountain in the front hall is recessed in a tiled niche. Why? This is a WCTU residence. Water is highly regarded.

Another surprise — there is a steamy aura of chlorine in the upper hall. Downstairs in the basement there is — lo — a swimming pool. Thus is water again saluted.

In the Willard Hall dining room there is a list of rules. "One glass of milk at both meals" and "Please leave dining room when finished eating. There are rooms provided for visiting."

Who stays at Willard?

There are some older women who can be overheard in the huge wooden phone booths - (morelike closets than booths) - saying "Well, he's some better today, but the doctor doesn't know when he can come home."

Most of the long term guests are apple cheeked. They look like girls who are away

from home for the first time. They are working girls, or girls looking for work.

There are a few hard looking numbers who wear mascara to the breakfast table and are openly contemptuous of the scrambled eggs.

Sixty bucks a week or not - they are not happy at Willard Hall.

Perhaps it was one of them who left these lines beside the upstairs telephone:

No smoking or toking
You gotta be joking
Pretend there's some men
If you possibly can.
Tell mother, tell father
There's no need to bother.
The one sin at all
in dear Willard Hall

Is what's on the table
To eat if you're able.
Ain't no fun here.

Let's go out for a beer.

This, mind you, comes from the kind of lodger who wouldn't be happy anywhere, not even at the ritzy women's club on the next street.

And it does show that Twenty One McGill had no monopoly on poets.

'Runners of the Wood' turn back hands of time

Coureur de bois visit Sainte-Marie

The Ontario Corps of the Coureur de Bois visited Ste. Marie Among the Hurons last weekend where they held their semi-annual meeting and election of officers while at the same time enjoying a social weekend on the historic grounds.

The corps, which consists of about 29 members from the Southern Ontario region are committed to preserving the history and skills of the coureur de bois, or "runners of the wood", who played a major role in opening up the country to settlement by venturing into the wilderness to work and trade with the Indians while at the same time establishing

the European presence.

The members of the corps all share this commitment to preserving the heritage and they go about the process in a very real way, by actually living the life of the coureur de bois on weekend outings.

Furthermore, they all contribute to their little society by specializing in some aspect of the historic lifestyle. For example, one member makes his own rifles while another makes replicas of the traditional buckskin and fur clothing worn by

their historic counterparts.

Two cousins are the founders of the corps: Gino and Peter Ferri originally began working on the idea separately, but one day bumped into each other at a sportsman show in Toronto, and were amazed that they both had been concentrating on one idea without the other's knowledge.

At that point they joined forces and the Ontario Corps was born. Since then it has grown to nearly 30 members in the space of about one year.

One main philosophy developed by the founders and held by all present members is that the corps should not be a "sideshow", but instead should be an educational medium and a service organization.

One might wonder how a group of people dressed in 200-year-old costumes might be of service to anyone, but when one understand the seriousness of those involved and the historic skills and crafts they've developed, the answer becomes clearer.

For instance, some corps members have visited other historic sites like Ste. Marie, and actually taught employees the traditional skills, like making fire with flint and steel, which those employees can demonstrate to visitors.

Skills

On other occasions, corps members versed in the historic skills of wilderness survival and tracking have offered their services to police forces and rescue teams searching for lost persons.

As member Doug Green asked rhetorically, "how many people do you know who can enter the bush with just the clothes on their back and a pocket full of food and stay there for several days to search for someone?"

Part of the gathering at Ste. Marie included a traditional meal of home cooked items like bread, moose meat, natural foods and a raisin, flour and water concoction called fry bread, all of which was put together by the female members of the

group.

That is another interesting aspect of the group. They emphasize the traditional values of the "runners of the wood", in that everyone shares, everyone contributes and everyone is involved in the decision making.

Midland council Monday

Next regular meeting of Midland council is scheduled for Monday, Dec. 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the council chambers at town hall.

Last week council met to pick its council related committees.