

# Castor Chatter



Maybe Beaver Bob is on to something over there on the opposite page. A long-time defender of the much-maligned groundhog, Bob describes how he has learned to live with and respect one such rodent that calls his lawn home. He also relates how Gobbler's Knob hogs have become famous for predicting the duration of winter. Maybe it's time to listen to Bob and try to reach a truce with Castor groundhogs. Who knows? Maybe our ground gobblers would bring us fame in return for a little kindness.

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From the good idea department comes this one in Kemptville. Mayor Harry Coulter has suggested the municipality begin acquiring sketches by local artists depicting town heritage scenes. The mayor thought such a collection would form a kind of archival record while encouraging area talent. Are you listening, Castor councillors?

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The Embrun IGA deserves a plug — and here it is — for supporting the Russell Curling Club rebuilding program by contributing \$500 worth of groceries for a draw to be held March 1. Club members are selling \$1 tickets, three of which could earn their holders \$500 (1st prize), \$300 (2nd prize), or \$200 (3rd prize) worth of groceries from the IGA. Revenue from the draw will be added to \$27,000 already accumulated towards replacement cost of the village curling rink which has been condemned.

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A lot of Castor residents are snarling about dogs running at large and the potential of the problem takes on new meaning when you consider these Osgoode Township statistics: Last year, there were 1,634 dog tags sold in the township and there were 30 licensed kennels.

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Not to worry! Embrun funny-money — it's officially called 125th trade dollars — will have real purchasing power. The special money is being printed as part of the village's elaborate plans to mark 125 years of existence. Russell Township has officially guaranteed that the money is good for financial transaction within Embrun boundaries during 1981 and redeemable for \$1 in traditional currency until Jan. 5, 1982.

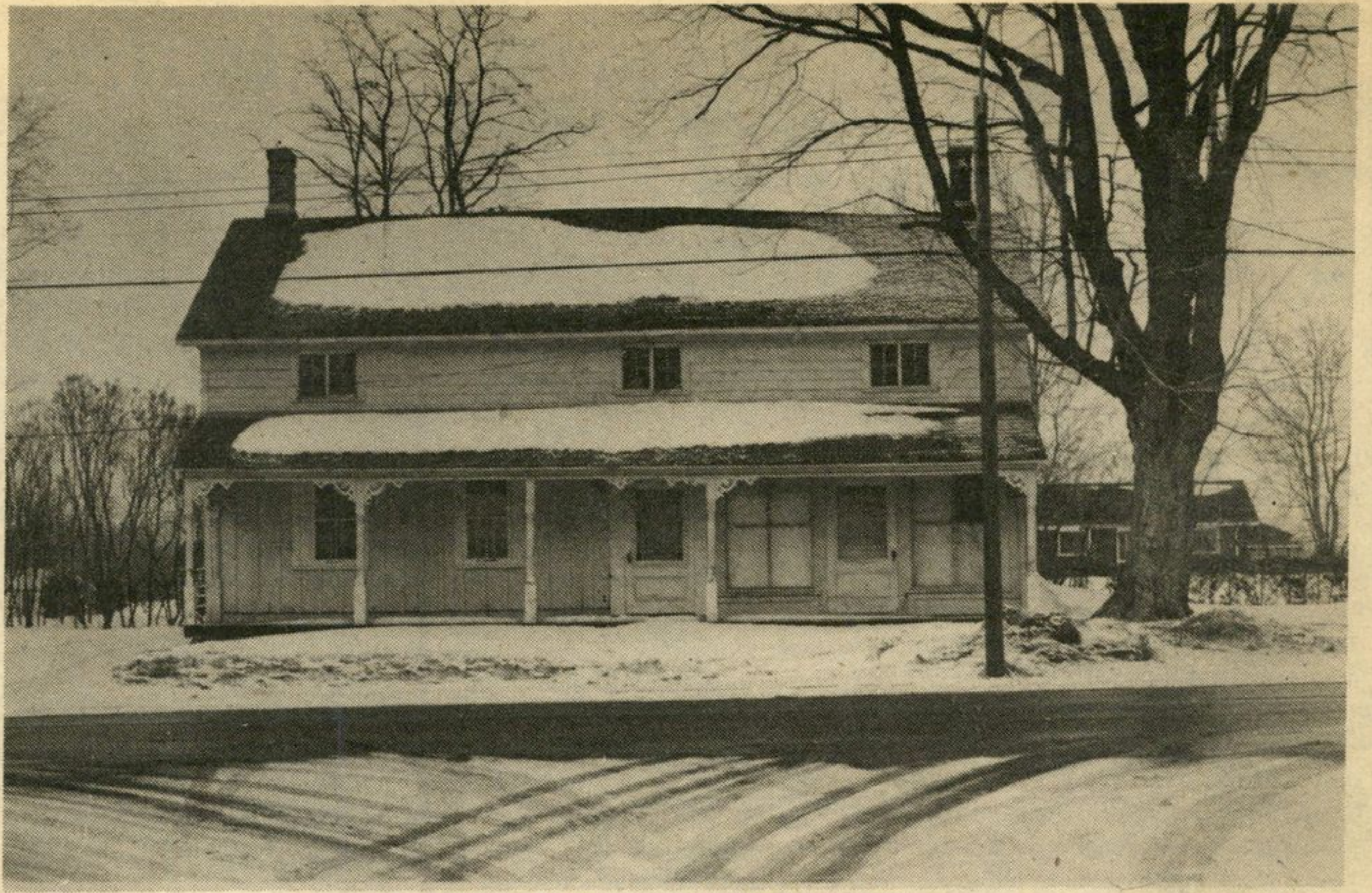
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On behalf of local citizenry, we apologize to Joe Rowan of the Winchester Press for the whack his car took during the Winter Carnival bed race. Nothing intentional, Joe. It was the team from Benny's Hotel which slid off the road with a buckled wheel, banging the rear-view window on a Volks and then smacking into Joe's car. And it had a great big "PRESS" sign in the window, too.

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Lee Merley, who took over the Morewood General Store from Metcalfe's McLaurins last November, sees a bright future from rural storekeepers. "More people are shopping locally these days because it cost so much to travel to the cities," Lee says. The Merkleys, who own another store at Lunenburg near the Seaway, have improvement plans for the Morewood business and have already linked in to a small food chain.

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IVESON HOUSE, METCALFE

## Historic house on road to recovery

by Kim Seale

Ann Mears sat on the edge of a refinished pressback rocker, carefully appraising the idea.

"Well, I hope there aren't any ghosts. I don't want to think of it anyway," she said.

Living in a house that dates back to the 1850's, one might suspect some original family members may not have entirely given up their hold on it.

Ann, 25, is a no nonsense person who has little time to consider possible spectral visitors. She has taken on the herculean job of restoring the Iveson house in Metcalfe but remains undaunted by the extensive amount of work to be done.

The decision to buy the heritage home came about through circumstance, Ann said.

"My lease was up in Ottawa. My mother had suggested the house was up for sale and that I should take a look at it. I fell in love with it and bought it."

The house is a low two storey with a long verandah across the front. The exterior is painted a now-faded sunshine yellow and is graced with white, ginger-bread trim.

The fate of the Iveson place was in limbo for more than a year after its Ottawa owner put it on the market. The possibility was raised at one point that the historical gem would be moved to Upper Canada Village.

Later, there was some discussion about transforming it into an Osgoode Township museum but

nothing materialized until Ann decided to face the challenge of returning the house to its former glory.

The house sustained structural damage due to a leaking roof. The hand-hewn timbers began to rot and the building sagged on one side from the combination of a weak foundation and the weight of innumerable stones filling the airspace between the walls. The newer rear section of the house has not seen the same amount of damage and it is in this half that Ann now lives.

She purchased the house Oct. 1, and began the laborious job of cleaning years of woodsmoke and just plain dirt from the walls. She's also in the process of refinishing old pieces of furniture that she feels will maintain the house's character.

Throughout all of this, Ann has continued with her position of manager for Lewiscraft at the Billings Bridge Plaza. After work at Lewiscraft on Saturdays, she changes into a uniform and works as a bartender at the El Toro restaurant in Ottawa. For most people one job is enough but Ann seems to have energy to spare.

One side of the house was used as a saddle and harness shop decades ago and Ann has visions of reviving it as a crafts shop.

Ann had her own business at the age of 19, a crafts shop called Metcrafts located on Main Street in Metcalfe. She set it up herself and ran it for three years with help

from her family. At the same time she was also working for Ovgem on Nepean Street in Ottawa.

After three years she moved to Barrhaven and was unable to continue her work at Metcrafts so the shop closed down.

She plans to stock her future shop in much the same way she did the first but is also entertaining the idea of holding classes for pottery, rice paper lampshades, or stitchery. One of her duties at Lewiscraft is demonstration work.

"First I'll have to see how many jobs I can hold down."

A shop in the house would not be ready before Christmas at the earliest but Ann has many helping family hands to aid her in achieving her goal. Her father has started some of the reconstruction in the foundation.

Total cost of restoration has not been estimated yet but Ann is approaching it one project at a time.

"I've always wanted my own house: big with lots of rooms and old furniture. An old house has so much character, not like new places."

Gentle shades of Wedgewood blue and pristine white in the decor have already brought the rear of the house alive again. If Ann has been visited by ghosts, you can be sure they are pleased with her efforts.

## Sidewalk Talk

By Mark Van Dusen



### The Great Russell Bank Bungle

But the myth wasn't dead. Bogie, Cagney and Raft were still blazing away on the silver screen and there were lots of smart-lipped thugs on the street who thought they could still get their way from behind a gat.

A pair of such thugs drifted into Russell June 16, 1936, bent on no good. According to a front page story in the Ottawa Journal that day, they cased the bank for several hours from a stolen car before one of them barged in and shouted, "this is a holdup, stick 'em up."

"At the same time he flourished a revolver, pointing it in the direction of the two customers."

The bank was still on Mill Street, in the red brick building which now houses the Castor Review, Bruno's Pizzeria and Maria and Bianca's Gift Shop.

The two customers were identified as C.F. McRae, Russell High School teacher, and Lloyd Loucks, a village resident. Also in the bank was N. Kay, chief teller.

But it was the manager, C.H. Stewart, out of sight in his office, who emerged to give the gunman more than he bargained for.

"Mr. Stewart came out with a revolver in his hand ready to use when he heard the commotion in the outer office."

"The moment the bandit saw the manager he opened fire but his aim was faulty and the manager, quite cool under the circumstances, immediately fired back."

"Faced with such unexpected resistance, the stranger got frightened and without any further attempt to reach the money in the cage, he bolted from the bank

firing several shots as he left, evidently for the purpose of preventing any quick move to follow him.

"Mr. Stewart ran out of the bank after the man had left and saw the automobile moving away at high speed. He again fired after the car in an attempt to cripple it but it was moving too fast and the second man who was at the wheel was steering in a zig-zag course."

The Journal article, submitted to the Review by William L. Wood, of R.R. 2, Russell, says a total of nine shots were exchanged, most of them fired by the manager.

"There are bullet holes in the bank walls and on the floor which are mute evidence of the unsuccessful effort to loot the bank."

It does not say whether the desperadoes were ever brought to

justice. Nor does it say whether Mr. Stewart was officially commended for his zeal.

But the headlines, stacked over the story in the old style, attest to the fact the manager's behavior was unusual even for the Dirty Thirties.

"Manager foils attempt to hold up Russell bank."

"C.H. Stewart pluckily returns fire of robber in bank."

"Gun is emptied at the men rushing off in car."

That's the kind of practice banks definitely frown on these days. Then again, there are two crooks, who may even now be reading this, who likely frowned on robbing another bank.

The Bank of Nova Scotia in Russell has been held up only once in the village's history.

That was in 1936 and it's no surprise no one has tried since.

The crooks got a hotter reception than they expected, you see. Not only did they get away with no money, they barely got away with their hides.

It was the end of the gangster era. Big-time punks like Legs Diamond, John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson, Bonnie and Clyde, Pretty Boy Floyd and Canada's own Alvin Karpis had all made their bloody marks. By '36, they were all either six feet under or behind bars.