

Sidewalk Talk



Blush !

By Mark Van Dusen

Why did I have to say "only once." I mean it would not have mattered a politician's promise if I had simply sidestepped any reference to the number of times the bank had been robbed in the first place.

But no. I had to be smart. I had to go out on a limb and blurt that Russell Village's only financial institution — the Bank of Nova Scotia — has been robbed once, and once only.

And I had to say it in the very first paragraph of my last Sidewalk Talk just to be absolutely sure no one missed it. Apparently no one did.

The phone rang off the hook, letters poured in, fingers were wagged at me on the street. All to say, in no uncertain terms, that the Russell bank has been looted not once, not twice but at least three or four times.

The most recent heist at the old location on Mill Street was in '71. Lise Leblanc, who is now the bank's accountant, had just started as a teller. It was June 30, 1:40 p.m.

"Three guys walked in. One of them had a machine gun and put it on my ribs," she said.

While the hoods rifled the cash drawers, an alert neighbor called police. The chase was on. The crooks took the bush near Anderson Road and Highway 417. All were rounded up and sent to the jug.

Years later, one of the same talented trio tried his luck at the Royal Bank in Embrun. He was nabbed again after ditching the loot in the Castor River. He followed the cash — up the river.

There is some confusion over whether there were one or two robberies at the Russell bank in the '60s. There was one for sure, in either '63 or '66. Eric Loucks, son of Russell barber Bill Loucks, was a clerk at the bank. The late Gar Hall was making a deposit.

"The robbers made Gar lie in the vault. They put a gun to his head and told him not to open his eyes. He didn't," Bill says.

The gunmen took it on the lam and, as the luck of Russell bank bandits, eventually ended up punching licence plates.

But by far the most uproarious roust was the one in '36, the one where manager C.H. Stewart drove the desperados out of town on the barrel of his blazing pistol. It's the one I said was the "only one."

Well, at least I know you're reading my stuff.



TESTING THE SPRING CASTOR

(Dennis McGann Photo)

Castor bus rolling along

Castor Bus Lines could soon expand service on two fronts — Edwards and Greely — owner Martin Bielz told the Castor Review.

The Bielz buses already run from Edwards every second Saturday but more frequent trips are being considered as a result of residents' demand. Mr. Bielz is also sounding out Greely residents on the need for a stop there.

He said operating the bus line over the last three years has been a tough haul but that the service has proven viable. But he said he is just breaking even and that he does not see a profit being made in the near future.

Since the bus service began, the cash fare hasn't increased. Bielz said the reason is the number of passengers has increased significantly in the same period of time. The hour-long trip to Ottawa costs \$1.50 one-way.

John Froese, a resident of Russell who uses the service to get to work in Ottawa, says the ser-

vice was one of the things that influenced him to move to Russell.

It provided "an alternative mode of travel". However, he is "disappointed more people aren't using the service so a second bus can be added."

According to Bielz, it "makes no sense for people to use their own cars. They (residents who don't use their own bus lines) should take a pencil and paper and realize the money they save."

Squirrels are real saps

While February's short-lived thaw may have had some syrup producers bitter over ruined sap, Walter Mattice of Morewood is coming out on top with his best season ever in syrup quality.

"A lot of syrup producers have been complaining that the warm weather is messing them up but we've had more sap than we could handle," Mr. Mattice says.

Walter, with the aid of friends and relatives, taps sap five weeks a year as a retirement hobby.

He partially attributes his grade AA syrup production this winter

to the tubing system he has hitched up to a 17 1/2 acre lot of sugar maple trees on his 100 acre farm. These special tubes absorb ultraviolet rays which heat and thaw sap frozen by low temperatures. They also guarantee water stays out of the sap (a common problem when buckets are used to collect sap.)

However, Mr. Mattice's pastime has not been totally carefree this winter. Squirrels have been chewing on his tube lines which costs him \$8 a bite to fix.

Castor Chatter



Clay is still mined at Russell and shipped to a plant near Ottawa for brickmaking, says a historical study of the South Nation River watershed which points out that Russell was once a focal point of brickmaking. The river's drainage basin counted several clay deposits and two brickyards once operated at Russell. Among structures built with bricks produced here was the Ottawa Civic Hospital. There were also two brickyards at Casselman and the four sites combined had a capacity of 10 million bricks per year by 1906. In addition, a pottery operated in Russell Village from 1873 to 1890.

The World War One memorial at Morewood is identified in the same report as a heritage site. Unlike most war memorials funded by public subscription, the imposing Morewood statue was erected privately by the Glasgow family. Such monuments are rare in Canada with only three life-size granite officers in small communities across the country. The statue is believed to be a portrayal of Captain E.J. Glasgow, one of 11 names inscribed on the plaque.

Gord McDonald just loves the old artifacts. It sure helps when he's surrounded by enough antiques to keep his shop at Cochrane's Corners in stock for six years. But only once was he so reluctant to part with a piece that he bought it back again. That was a bronze statue that he sold for \$350 to a woman in Ottawa then later paid her \$550 for it. "I got my \$200 back just looking at it." Gord will be opening for the season towards the middle of May.

Mike Benoit is a heating oil salesman based at Crysler who proved recently that the people who haul fuel locally are honest businessmen unlike the people who fix the prices. Mike carried a load to Chesterville and the home owner returned to find a little package on his doorstep. It was the receipt wrapped around \$1.69 in change with an explanation from Mike that he found the money in the yard.

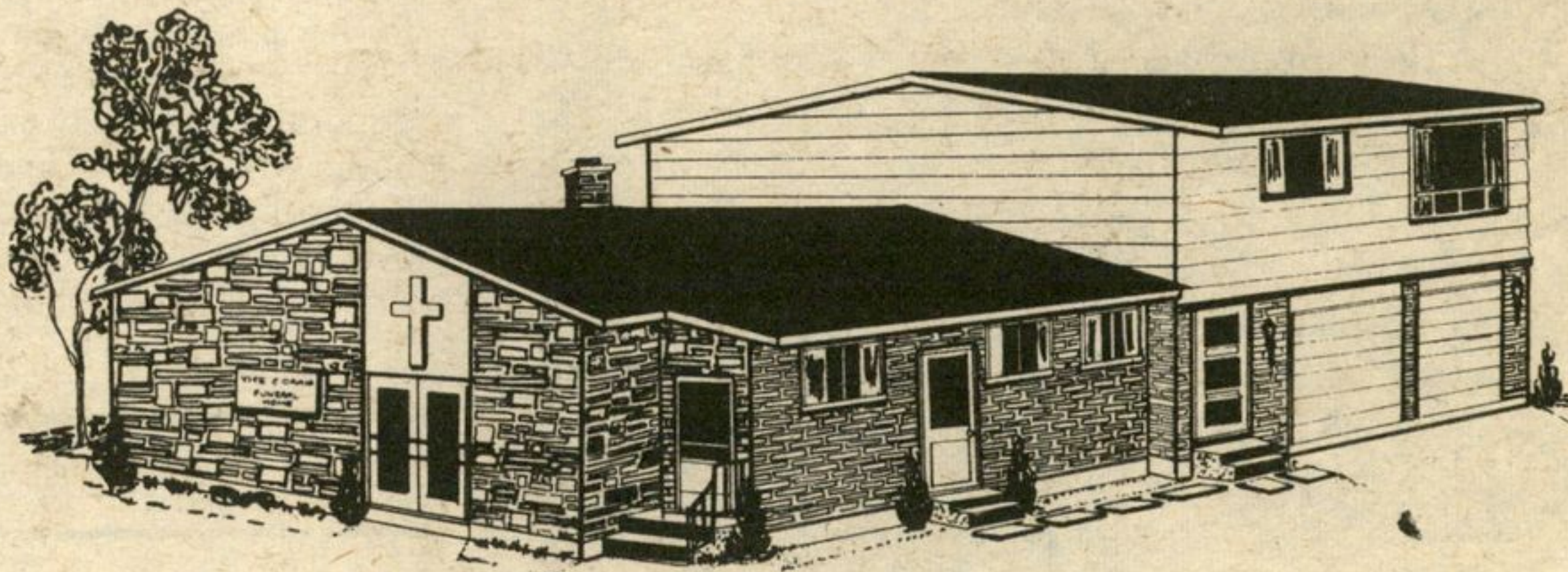
Russell old home weekend organizers are working feverishly to make the June 27, 28 event a smashing success. Mail, telephone and word of mouth have been used to round up as many former Russellites as possible and the organizing committee reminds that local support is crucial. Contact Sandy Moffat or Glenn Millar with your inquiries and suggestions.

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