

In back issues**Anonymous letters commonplace**

No local newspaper is complete without some spirited letters to the editor. As much as the stories and advertising, they reflect the concerns and lifestyle of the people of the era.

Interestingly, the majority of letters in the late 19th and early 20th century were published without naming the identity of the author.

Wandering animals were clearly a problem before cars took over as the following letter, published on November 30, 1888 relates:

"DEAR SIR, — Can any of your readers suggest a plan to induce our respected friend in the west end to keep his cow off the street both night and day? We admit she is a fine cow. Why not? She has cleaned out every garden west of the railway track that she can get into, to the destruction of cabbage, beets, celery, marigolds, carrots, etc. Those that are fortunate enough to have their gardens and yards fenced, and by being very particular to fasten up every time they go out, can avoid these losses, but what can we do that have no fences?" (signed) Neighbour.

Another topic that caused consternation, then as now, was the state of the roads. On December 7, 1916 'A Citizen' wrote:

"Mr. Editor, - Will you allow me to say a few words regarding the condition of the side streets in Stouffville?"

It is a well-known fact that the road which unites with Main St. at the Christian Church — commonly known as "The Back Road" — is at all times, in poor condition, but at present it is in some places almost impassable. The road on Montreal Street is a disgrace to the town. While passing over it wagons sink into mud up to the axles. It is almost impossible for an automobile to drive over the road now.

What is our Council doing? Is it not its duty to administer the affairs of the village? Then why this negligence in looking after these roads. Do not the people living on these side streets pay taxes? Why are they forced to drive over such wretched roads? And not they alone but doctors, butchers, bakers, carters and farmers suffer through this negligence.

I have been a resident of this town for a long time, and I know that for years these roads have been neglected, an eyesore to the community, and yet the Council sits idly by and seems oblivious of the need for prompt action. It is time that its members have awakened from their reverie and set about to do something in the interests of the people." Memo to Council: the buck will always stop here.

On December 21 of the same year 'An Observer' berated certain ill-mannered individuals for their unseemingly behaviour in public business places.

"Mr. Editor," the writer began, "I hope I may have the privilege, through your valuable paper, of drawing attention to a matter of interest to business men. I refer to the practice of some persons using business places as rendezvous when they have nothing else to do but exercise their lungs. There are places of business in almost every town where it is impossible to have a private word with the proprietor on account of listening ears of one or a group of war

experts whom one's presence has interrupted in a marvellous display of 'hot air' concerning the war or other great subject. The result is that people avoid such a place where this is a constant practice. Who wants to transact business with a crown listening to all that is said? I know a store in a town in eastern Ontario where a lady seldom makes a purchase on account of the presence of a band of 'warriors' who throng filling the air with gossip and spattering the floor with tobacco juice. Friendship may become a burden when it interferes with business."

During World War I, the front page of The Tribune often carried letters received by local families of young soldiers fighting on the front lines.

On March 16, 1916, 'Freel' wrote to his brother, thanking him for the tobacco he had received from the family. "Take it from me that was welcome," he wrote, "I hope all the fellows could realize the pleasure, even the smell of good Canadian tobacco gives us and some of the old American soldiers

simply had their tongues out for the feast.

"Keeping enough for myself, I divided the rest among a great part of the Company and they wish to thank their benefactors. Soon we will again be on the firing line and the 'Bull' will go a long way towards making it easier to stand the strain of a week's bombardment and watchfulness." 'Freel' continued, "Tell them that for whiteness the small village of Stouffville throws the others into the shade 40 ways when it comes to a real shakedown in the matter of comradeship and support. By Jove Bill it gives a fellow a bracer and a might warm feeling towards the old Burg."

On Feb. 19 of the same year, Mrs. Hutchison received a letter from her sons at the front who wrote, "We are out of the trenches again after being in. I bet you can't guess what job I have got now.

I am cook for our machine gun boys, seven of us. Most of us have two pair of socks one suit of underwear (on us) and shaving kit.

Schell lumber is established firm in Stouffville area

Schell Lumber Ltd. is one of Stouffville's oldest family run businesses catering to the needs of contractors and home owners throughout the area.

Ron Schell, whose grandfather, Wesley, opened Schell Lumber in 1922, explained that 70 per cent of the company's business is generated from local contractors and 30 per cent from the DIY (do it yourself) market.

While most building centers cater to the DIY market, Schell Lumber values its associations with with contractors.

"We stress quality, service and value which bring the tradesmen back," Schell said.

Business has steadily increased during the last several years, due to the expansion in and around Stouffville.

"There is plenty of subdivision work and custom homes being built," said Schell.

"Most of what we stock is for the housing sector, but we do get into commercial application in part," Schell explained.

Contractors and those who

do-it-themselves will find lumber, mouldings, hardware, dry wall, roofing, bricks — all elements that make up a house at Schell Lumber. The store also carries vinyl flooring, electrical items, plumbing, windows and hardwood.

Schell's father, Percy, and uncle, Harry, are at the helm of their father's business, each possessing over 40 years of experience.

Twenty employees, each with a diverse knowledge of the industry, work at Schell Lumber. Many of them, having started with the company when they got out of school, have over 12 years under their belts.

"Our company is our employees," Schell said.

One of Schell Lumber's unique features is that of a manufacturing mill upstairs. The mill is operated by Harry and carpenter, Dick Ward. Custom orders, including windows, doors, mouldings and railings are made in the shop, either to duplicate older fittings or to fit specific measurements. Each piece made is from scratch.



Wayne Emerson and Mike Heffernen help customers at the front counter.

"We have customers visit the mill with orders from as far away as Toronto and Oakville. We even had an order to reproduce several 1950s windows and sent them to the Caribbean," Schell commended.

Founder Wesley Schell converted the Canadian Bee and Honey Supply Company, which manufactured bee hives and housed a small retail outlet for farmers, into one of the areas largest independent building supply firms.

Schell Lumber presently has 5,000 square feet of showroom space, 2,500 square feet of manufacturing floor, 15,000 square feet of warehousing and five acres of outside storage at their facility located on Edward Street, in Stouffville.

The company takes advantage of being located next to a rail line where it receives car loads of western cedar from British Columbia each year.

Also sold is Ontario Jack Pine and Spruce, which is small dimensional lumber for framing houses. Large

dimensional lumber, including 2 x 10 and 2 x 20 boards, wrapped and kiln dried, are transported from west.

"Every year we do more and more business via the rail. If you plan well, it's less expensive than trucking. You can save between two and five per cent in costs, which is considerable because there aren't great mark-ups with lumber," Schell said.

Schell's showroom was recently renovated. It's opened Monday through Saturday, from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.