

Rural Reflections

Ontario's Finest Summer Ballroom

by
Ruth
LeBlanc



When we first moved to Musselman Lake back in 1984, it was cottage territory, thick with cedars, the air fresh and fragrant.

The lakeside community was so quaint and unspoiled that a movie set in the 1950s was filmed there not long after our arrival in our new home. Meeting new people and replying to the question of where I lived, I noticed that faces would darken with worry about our chosen location. Hidden, ominous innuendoes suggested that it was a slightly scary place to live.

It seems that infamous bank robbers and daring gangsters the Boyd Gang once hid from the law in a long-gone cottage on Valley Rd. The feeling I was left with was that some people thought they might still be there, or at least their relatives.

For weeks I expected a band of roving thieves to come lunging out of the bushes as I walked the dog down quiet lake streets. Nothing bad or sinister ever did happen. The biggest action on our street was when some freedom-seeking horses escaped the stables and trotted past our house, stopping at our gate for a pat.

Change though has come, and we

have not escaped the residential building frenzy that is happening all around us. Many little cottages, some built in the '20s, have either been removed, rebuilt or renovated. I witnessed the oldest dance hall in Canada -- the crumbling Glendale Dance Pavilion located at the south end of the lake -- being demolished, leaving the southern lakefront property vacant.

The corner of Ninth Line and Mitchell Ave., where Sunny's Variety Store stands, was a very different sight back in '84. There was a large old white wooden structure with a smaller store and snack bar, both in bad repair.

This was originally the Winsome Corner Booth and Dance Hall, owned and operated by Jas. Pidgeon. Back in 1953, Mr. Pidgeon made an offer to the town to help create a public beach at the lake's south end. It was reported that the council of the day suggested "that a hazard might be created".

Not alone with his woes was Cy Bellman, owner and operator of Musselman's Lake Arena Bowling Centre, who was operating under protest when his application for a

licence was denied. The bowling alley didn't disappear but underwent major renovations, and is now home to Charlinda's Chocolates and residential apartments.

Years ago, Lake Musselman -- as it was referred to -- comprised mainly of seasonal cottages and was the hub of summer social life for people near and far. Visitors and cottagers danced to big band music at any of the three dance pavilions dotted around the lake. An announcement in the newspaper in 1953 proclaimed Cedar Beach "Ontario's Finest Summer Ballroom".

Long-time residents said it was quite the place to be. People would walk the little streets and admire the many lovely gardens. Picnics were held on beaches and many romances began in the summer moonlight at the lake. Just 50 years ago we were a seasonal community that came to life each spring. Now year-round residents fill old homes and build new ones, and our lakeside community bustles with life.

Without the aid of a crystal ball who is to know our future, but whatever it holds you can bet it will be interesting.

Letters from our readers

Artist draws inspiration



To the Editor:

The lady holding the purse and talking to her friend soon sat down and did some quick figure studies on bond paper using her fountain pen! I'm referring to your editorial cartoon in *Stouffville This Month* for January 2003. The lady had shopping to do and forgot to sign them, but I thought they were good enough to mail them to you.

This lady with the purse shows some talent, as you can see.

The Clock Tower Artists
Stouffville

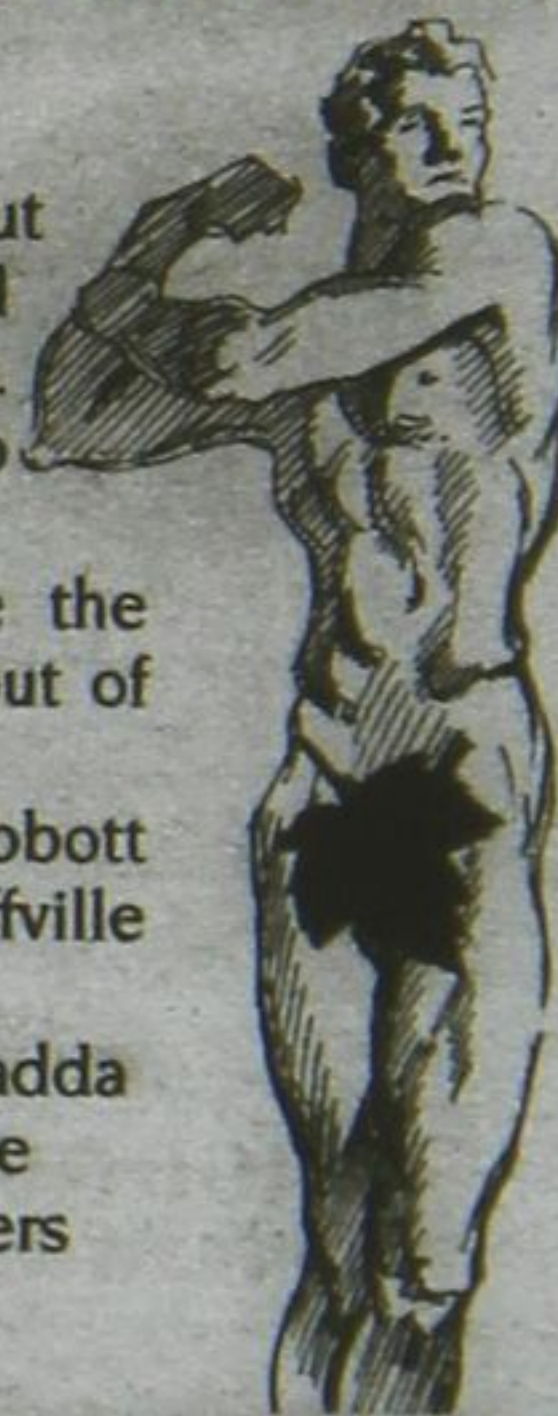
Well developed humour

To the Editor:

Your January cartoon about the seniors' move to the old civic offices was hilarious. Everyone I know has found it to be a great giggle.

I would consider it to be the cartoon of not only the year, but of the decade.

Jennet Abbott
Stouffville



Editor's note: Cartoonist Walt Radda won second-place honours in the Canadian Community Newspapers Association awards for 2001.

Chirp! Meow! SPLASH! Hiss!

Grooming

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