



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 51, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada L7G 4T1
www.esquesinghistoricalsociety.ca

Vol. 40 No. 5

January - February 2016

SAM MCGIBBON'S HOTEL: A GEORGETOWN LANDMARK

by John McDonald

The hotel, situated in the heart of the village's business district at 79 Main Street South, always attracted 'travellers' (or sales representatives). The Drummer's Snack, which was a summer occasion for travelling salesmen to meet socially, was held in Georgetown and the McGibbon Hotel was the headquarters. The Union



Bus delivered passengers to and from the railroad station and a sample room was maintained for the travellers' to display their merchandise in the hotel.

First-class stable accommodation was to be found at the rear of the building. A complex of

buildings associated with the hotel included an ice house which stored ice cut from the old Barber pond and, later from Lawson's Pond in Stewarttown. Fresh eggs and milk arrived daily at the hotel from a farm which Sam McGibbon owned on the southern fringes of Stewarttown. Several shops once occupied the front of the hotel and a barbershop located on the Mill Street side of the hotel, on a basement level, was reputed to be a favourite gambling spot....

When prohibition was legislated many hotelkeepers ‘bootlegged’, but not Sam McGibbon. McGibbon didn’t maintain his standard hotel license during the prohibition years....

Sam’s wife, Ann, kept white linen in the dining room and the table supplied “with an abundance of food – the best the market affords – which is well cooked and neatly served.” The hotel in its earliest years had been a popular location for fashionable wedding receptions and banquets.

The McGibbon family lived at the hotel. A table was maintained for the family in the main dining room and large living quarters were kept on the second floor.... The McGibbon family took great pride in the hotel business they had established over the years. When Sam died August 20, 1940 only a few months after his wife’s death, a daughter, Gladys and a son, Jack, took over the business until 1962.

The business was then sold to Isaac Switzer Investments of Toronto and in 1967 – almost 100 years after Thomas Clark had purchased the hotel – Gladbar Hotels Limited of Toronto took possession. George and Nick Markou purchased the hotel December 1978. The business however retains the McGibbon name which has been connected with the hotel and downtown business community since 1895.

-excerpt from *Halton Sketches Revisited*, John McDonald, Norval: 1996

THE DOMINION HOUSE -ACTON

By H. P. Moore

The Dominion Hotel (14-26 Main N) was erected by the late Robert Agnew. It was always a popular travellers’ home. ...

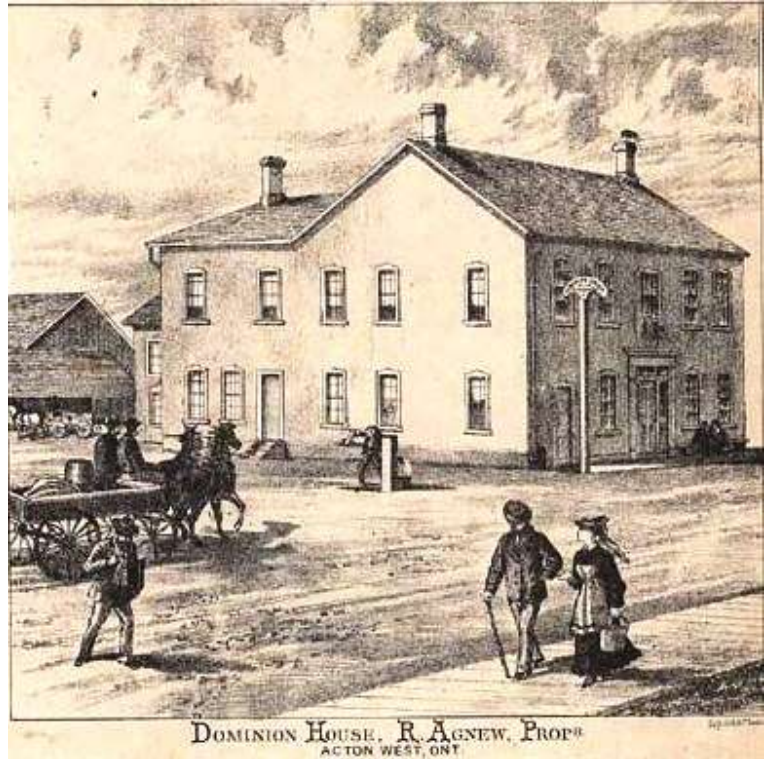
Robert Agnew built the Dominion Hotel, which under the supervision of himself and his able housekeeper, Mrs. Agnew, was for many years one of the most popular hostelries in the province. Mr. and Mrs. Agnew left their Old Country home, near Carluke, Scotland, shortly after their marriage and came to Canada to make their fortune. For several years they kept a big boarding house at Smith’s Mills, where the fine Douglas and Sayers farms in the first concession of Esquesing are located. Mr. and Mrs. Agnew won their reputation for wholesome food and comfortable beds in this mill boarding house, and there were many old residents who worked at the mills or teamed lumber to Acton, who recounted the excellent treatment they received at their hands. About 65 or 70 years ago Mr. and Mrs. Agnew and their little family came to Acton. They leased the old California House, on Main Street, which stood near the Main Street creek (near the Library).

This tavern they conducted for a number of years, and then decided that it would be advantageous to get nearer the centre of town. The old Anderson lot was purchased, the old log cabin torn down, and the new Dominion Hotel grew up on the site. An engraving of this new hotel appeared in the County Atlas issued by Walker & Miles, in 1877....

“Bob” was a genial host and Mrs. Agnew, “mother” to every lonesome commercial traveller on the road.... In the early days hotel banquets were frequent.

The Lodges, the Councils, even the School Boards celebrated the conclusion of the year’s business with an oyster supper or a more formidable spread at one or other of the four hotels in town. There was naturally a good deal of rivalry among the hosts and hostesses as to which could and would furnish the most comprehensive and appetizing menus. It was conceded that the Dominion generally took the cake.

-excerpt from *Acton’s Early Days*, H. P. Moore and G.A. Dills (ed.), Acton: 1939



FIRE GUTS DOMINION HOTEL, ONE MAN DIES



Fire and police officials are continuing to investigate the cause of Sunday’s fire which killed one man and gutted the century-old Dominion Hotel on Main St. N.... Dead is 58-year-old Howard Gibbons a hotel resident. His body was removed from the scene at about noon Sunday.

Volunteer firemen spent a grueling 13 hours at the scene of the Dominion Hotel fire Sunday morning. By 3:30 in the afternoon, when most major cleanup was accomplished, firefighters crawled home to sleep- most for 12 hours straight.... Firemen were paged at 2:30 in the morning, all turning up within minutes of each other. Most of the fire danger was over by 8:00 a.m. and the awesome job of cleanup began. -AFP, 22 August 1979



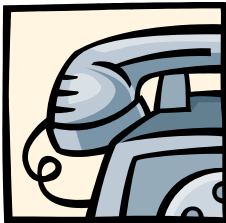
ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

2016

- Wed. 13
Jan. 2016 **ROOM FOR THE NIGHT**
Hotels and their attendant bar rooms have been a feature of settlements from the beginning. Local historian Mark Rowe will take us on a tour of some of the “Hotels” of Esquesing, exploring the history of road-side watering holes to the finest establishments in town.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 10
Feb. 2016 **HISTORY OF ONTARIO FENCES**
Local historian Rob Burnett will survey the fields of Esquesing and beyond in his history of fencing in the farmers’ fields in Ontario. Rob will speak after our brief Annual General Meeting reports and elections.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 09
March **CHANGES IN THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INDUSTRY IN HALTON AND PEEL COUNTIES**
Join Dr. W.D. (Bill) McIlveen as he outlines the rise and decline of the fruit and vegetable industry in Halton and Peel over the course of European settlement.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 13
Apr. 2016 **THE STREET ARAB –BRITISH HOME CHILDREN**
Sandra Joyce, author of three books on British Home Children will speak about her search for her father’s family. She discovered that this child migrant scheme brought more than 120,000 children to Canada as indentured farm workers and domestics. Sandra will speak about the contribution of these migrants to our country.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.

RENEW YOUR 2016 MEMBERSHIP

Refreshments served from 7:00 p.m.



Stephen Blake	905 877-8251	President
Karen Hunter	905 877-7363	Treasurer
Dawn Livingstone	905 877-6506	Secretary
J. Mark Rowe	905 877-9510	Archivist
Jan Raymond	905 877-9172	Social
David Borrett	905 702-0737	Membership
Ron Raffan	905 457-7696	Webmaster
Ray Denny	905 877-3890	Publications

Society Notes

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

<www.esquesinghistoricalsociety.ca>

Send your e-mail to mrowe6@sympatico.ca or dawn.livingstone@sympatico.ca

EHS NEWSLETTER

John Mark Rowe prepared this newsletter with assistance from Karen Hunter, Dawn Livingstone and Rob Burnett. Submissions welcome.

Please consider an electronic newsletter sent to your e-mail address. Not only will you save the Society postage, you get to see the colour pictures!

MEMBERSHIP

We had 94 memberships for 2015-16. Our membership runs from February to February, so renewals are now being accepted. The individual membership rate is \$20. The family or institution rate is \$25. Cheques payable to the Society can be mailed to our post box or payable by cash or cheque to our membership secretary, David Borrett at a public meeting.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

www.archives.gov.on.ca

EHS ARCHIVES

Karen and Mark continue to deal with donations of printed material and photographs to the collection. The Archives are being accessed more often, through the Library staff, which is encouraging. The addition of the Creativity Centre to the Library resources has been a boon to the Archives, since we can scan documents and photos right there in the Georgetown Library, without having to take the items home and return them later.

The updating of the photo finding aid and scanning of photographs continues.

EHS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The EHS needs your ideas! Please consider sitting on the executive of your Historical Society and help make decisions about our meetings and projects. Contact a current

executive member to put your name forward at the February AGM.

HALTON-PEEL OGS

Meetings are at Brampton Library, 65 Queen Street, East or Oakville Library, 120 Navy Street, at 2 p.m.

Jan. 24 –*Dorothy Kew* "Want to know how to research your family history but don't know where to start?" –in Brampton

Feb. 28 –*Marian Press* "Putting Your Family Tree Online, What Choice Should You Make?" –in Oakville

DEVEREAUX HOUSE

Open Thursdays 1-6 p.m. at 11494 Trafalgar Road, Georgetown.

STREETSVILLE HIST. SOCIETY

Archives are open Sundays and Wednesdays from 1 to 4 p.m. at 4415 Mississauga road, Streetsville.

Feb. 11 –*Joanne Doucette* -Leslie and Beatty family histories; Streetsville United Church, 7:30 p.m.

BRAMPTON HIST. SOCIETY

Heart Lake Presbyterian Church at 7:15.

Jan. 21 - *Cathy Willoughby* - Come explore the Historic Bovaird House quilt collection up close to see how they were made.

Feb. 18 – Show and Tell -Please email monica.polley@rogers.com with your name and a description of your object.

March 17 – AGM and Heritage update.

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society meets at the Waldie Blacksmith Shop at 16 James Street on the third Thursday at 8p.m.

NASAGIWEYA HIST. SOCIETY

info@nasagiweyahistoricalociety.com

TRAFALGAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

All events at former Palermo Schoolhouse, 2431 Dundas Street West, Oakville.

<http://www.tths.ca/events.html>

HALTON HILLS SPORTS MUSEUM

OPEN: Sat. 6-9 p.m. & Sunday 1-4:30 p.m. at Mold-Masters Sportsplex.

They are accepting nominations for the Sports Hall of Fame at jboyce3@cogeco.ca

TERRA COTTA HALL

Terra Cotta Community Hall rentals:
Contact Jen Lusby at 905-702-1056.

NORVAL L.M. MONTGOMERY SOCIETY FORMED

The Norval Lucy Maud Montgomery Society was formed on 10 Dec. 2015 with Kathy Gastle as chair. The Society is a committee of the Halton Hills Heritage Foundation. Its current aim is to purchase the Norval Presbyterian Manse from the adjoining Church and creating a Literacy Centre and Museum about Montgomery.

BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM EHS

The EHS publications *Acton: The History of Leathertown*, *Georgetown: Reflections of a Small Town*, *Glen Williams: An Oasis in the Credit Valley* may be available for \$24.95 from **What the Dickens** book store in Acton, **Indigo Books** at Georgetown Mall and **Reeve & Clarke Fine Books** in Glen Williams.

EHS members qualify for a discount. Arrangements for book purchase can be made with Ray Denny at raycdenny@gmail.com.

HERITAGE HALTON HILLS

The Heritage committee of the Town of Halton Hills has had a busy 2015. They use the photos of the EHS in the weekly "The Way We Were" feature in the *Independent Free Press*.

The voluntary "signage" programme added five new signs this year:

- 45 Market St., Georgetown -1854
- 510 Main St., Glen Williams -1884
- 14249 Tenth Line, Esquesing -1883
- 34 Albert St., Georgetown -1913
- 73 Main St. N., Georgetown -1890

One new property was designated: The Perkins House at 88 Bower St., Acton was built in 1891.

Designation Plaques were unveiled at Forbes House, 401 Draper St., Norval, which was built about 1840 as a hotel; Devereaux House at 11494 Trafalgar Road,

Stewarttown, which was built in the 1860s as a farmhouse.

Heritage Halton Hills recently commented on the McGibbon project in Georgetown and the developer met with the committee to take their suggestions into consideration.

The group has a full plate of projects underway for 2016.



The Forbes House at 401 Draper St., Norval

PALERMO CHURCH MOVED

St. Luke's (Anglican) Palermo Church has been moved to a new location on its property to make room for the construction of a new parish centre. Located at Dundas Street West and Valleyridge Drive, just west of Bronte Road, the church was moved to its new location in November (2015).... The existing cemetery will be maintained and continue in service.

-*Niagara Anglican*, January 2016

TORONTO POSTCARD SHOW

Sunday 21 Feb. from 10-5 at Japanese Cdn Cultural Centre, 6 Garamond Court, Toronto. Thousands of postcards offered for sale. www.torontopostcardclub.com

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It is time to renew your 2016 membership in the EHS. While our year begins in February, payment of the \$20 fee will ensure your newsletter subscription will continue to arrive on time! Payment can be made at our meetings or by post to P.O. Box 51, Georgetown, ON L7G 4T1.

MILESTONES 2016

175th anniversary of the Election of Baldwin and Lafontaine - Leaders for Responsible Government

In 1841, Sir Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine and Robert Baldwin, as well as Joseph Howe in Nova Scotia, worked to establish a responsible government, the system that we have today. Lafontaine, a champion of democracy and French-language rights, became the first leader of a responsible government.



175th anniversary of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's birth

The first French-Canadian Prime Minister after Confederation, Sir Wilfrid Laurier (born November 20, 1841) encouraged immigration to the West of Canada. Laurier was Prime Minister during a period of major industrialization and oversaw the inclusion of Alberta and Saskatchewan into Confederation. In 1910, he led the creation of the Royal Canadian Navy.

150th anniversary of the Fenian Raids

The raids of 1866 furthered the cause of Confederation by encouraging a united defence. The defence of the extensive Canadian border against Irish-American raiders was victorious and showed the devotion of Canadians to their nation. A number of Canadian Forces regiments can trace their heritage back to this time period.

Centennial of women's suffrage

The first provinces to grant women the right to vote in 1916 were Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. This was an early step in the path to equality and women's rights.



Norval volunteers during the Fenian Raids EHS00443

Centennial of the Battles of the Somme and Beaumont-Hamel (First World War)

While this historic offensive decimated the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, it also prepared Canadians for their success at Vimy Ridge. The battalion was subsequently recognized for its unwavering bravery in the face of trying conditions.

75th anniversary of the Battle of Hong Kong

The battle of Hong Kong was 17 and a half days of intense fighting. When Allied forces were overrun on Christmas Day, December 25, 1941, those who had survived the battle found themselves in what would become four years of captivity in prisoner-of-war and Japanese work camps.

- Government of Canada <http://canada.pch.gc.ca>

Stump Fences in Esquesing and Ontario

By Rob Burnett

When one thinks of early agricultural fences in Esquesing, many people think of the pine stump fence. First growth white pine trees were both abundant and enormous in the early years of the township. When pulled, and laid side- to- side they made a respectable barrier that would help satisfy one of the requirements to acquire title to the land—fencing. In addition, they possessed such a large quantity of resin, that they could last a century or more without decay. There are fewer and fewer examples of pine stump fences today. Many farmers have burned them



Figure 3. The stump puller ca. 1880. Recently constructed of wooden beams and cross-pieces, it probably weighed about half a ton. The customary, rapid action shown here could not have been the regular one made with one. It required only one person to operate it.

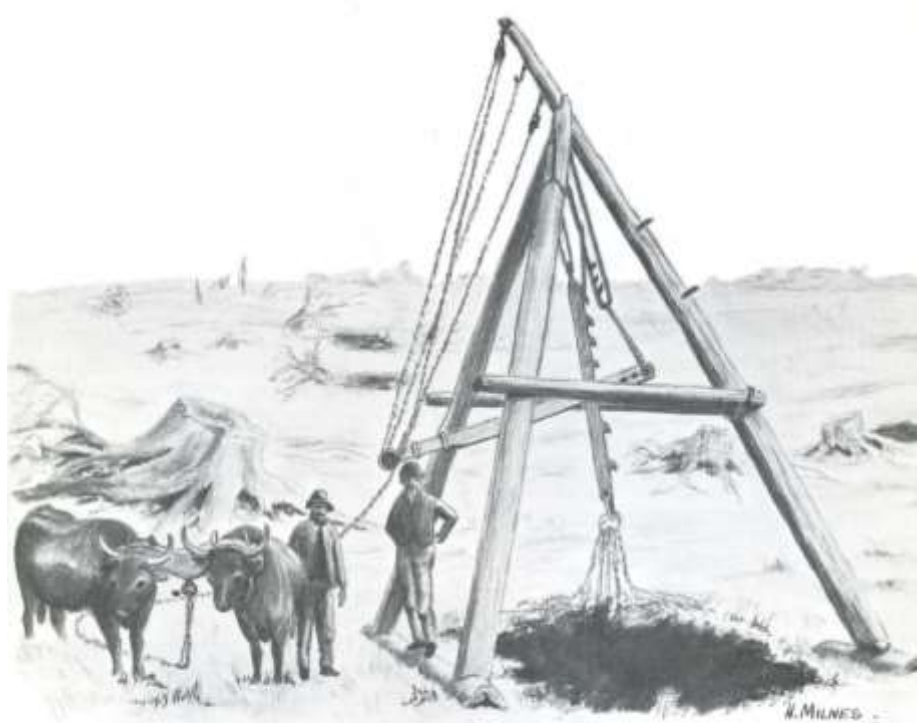
because they prevent modern-day equipment from making full use of the land, and they can harbour noxious weeds and bushes, as well as undesirable wildlife. Decay also makes them a bygone relic of the past.

Excerpts from Pioneer Days in Upper Canada by Edwin C. Guillet, University of Toronto Press, original publication date: 1933, pages 126-129

One of the heaviest and most difficult pieces of

work was “stumping,” or removing the stumps from land which had been logged. The first crops were usually sown among the stumps, which occupied about one-eighth of the field. Stumps of many softwood trees rotted away in a year or two, but those of hardwood lasted eight or ten years, and resinous stumps, like the pine, much longer. In early York, (present- day Toronto) stumps were prominent in the streets, from which they were removed by the operation of the ”Stump Act.” Any person found intoxicated might be sentenced to the task of eradicating a certain number of stumps, and, after his “community service,” the culprit was usually very sober and very tired and did not repeat his offence. This law was so beneficial to York, that other localities imitated it.

A more general method of accomplishing this necessary work was a "stumping bee." Various methods were used in the work; some of the stumps were chopped out, others were dragged out by oxen after chains had been fastened around the chief roots. Many, especially pine stumps too solid to move, were burned out, or removed by blasting. In some districts, a stumping-machine, composed of a screw fastened to a framework was used. This operation consisted of elevating the root by using oxen or horses to provide power. The stump fences which are still a characteristic feature of the rural landscape recall many an old-time stumping bee. Susanna Moodie writes in the classic journal of the Ontario pioneer experience, her impression of the stumping bee in July of 1834. (1852 edition of *Roughing It In the Bush*, 1923, p. 305)



*STUMP PULLER - built and used by J.W. Durkholder, 1880. Otterville.
After contemporary photographs.*

“In the bush, where hands are few and labour commands an enormous rate of wages, these gatherings are considered indispensable, and much has been written in their praise; but to me they present the most disgusting picture of bush life. They are noisy, riotous, drunken meetings, often terminating in violent quarrels, sometimes even in

bloodshed. Accidents of the most serious nature often occur, and very little work is done when we consider the the number of hands employed, and the great consumption of food and liquor. I am certain in our case, had we hired with the money expended in providing for the bee, two or three industrious, hard-working men, we should have got through twice as much work, and have had it done well, and have been gainers in the end.... We had to endure a second and third repetition of this odious scene before sixteen acres of land were rendered for the reception of our fall crop of wheat.”

J. W. Dunbar Moodie's short poem well described the usual events:

“There was a man in our town In our town, in our town-
There was a man in our town, He made a logging bee;
And he bought lots of whisky, To make the loggers frisky-
To make the loggers frisky, At his logging bee.
The Devil sat on a log heap, A log heap, a log heap-
A red-hot burning log heap- A-grinning at the bee;
And there was lots of swearing, Of boasting and of daring,
Of fighting and of tearing, At that logging bee.”

As time passed, many farm fields were cleared of all but the largest stumps. These were the first-growth white pine stumps whose diameter could easily stretch ten feet across or more. By the 1840's, 50's and 60's, technology had reached the point where bees were no longer needed. Stump pullers, operated by one or two men and a horse or an ox could remove any root with relative ease.

Nassagaweya Resident not stumped by Pioneer Techniques

By Jennifer Enright

It's not hard to find Joe Windmoller's property in Nassagaweya. Along the 15 Sideroad west of Speyside, you'll see a beautiful stump fence extending about 1000 feet along the front of his property. The sign announcing that this is Windmoller's home looks attractive, but it's clearly not the main point of interest. Joe said one of the first things people notice is his fence. Motorists have been known to stop and take photos to capture its beauty. You could also call him the stump fence maker because this particular one, with its lovely grey tones and serpentine roots, was constructed by Joe. With a picture of what he wanted in his mind, Joe set to work in the 1990s to make his stump fence out of the remains of two that once existed in the area. Before 15 Sideroad was widened he had the foresight to move the age-old remains of tree roots on his property in order to preserve them. Then he decided to use these stumps as well as others from his former property on the south side of the road to construct a new barrier. Without the benefit of pioneers to guide him, Joe somehow knew what was required: stumps with rocks in between. Owners covet the rare stump barriers that still exist. The stones remain, but many cedar stumps rot away, so there are less and less of them.

-excerpt from *North Halton Compass*, 2 July 2004, page 15