



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

www.esquesinghistoricalsociety.com

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May-June 2019

APPROVE WRECKING OF HISTORIC TOWN HALL

Acton's Town Hall, built in 1881 at a cost of \$5,000 should be torn down, Halton Hills works committee recommends. A **parking lot** for firefighters cars would replace it, if the recommendation passes Council next Monday night. Housed here now are the police offices and senior citizen's drop-in centre. The upstairs is no longer used and staircase was removed. *-Acton Free Press, 27 April 1977 p.1*

THEY PAVED PARADISE...

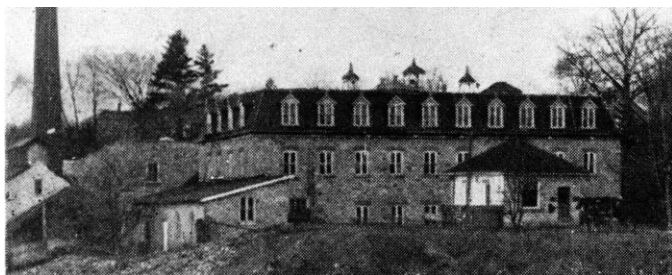
The dreadful scenario revealed by the *Acton Free Press* in 1977 has a happy ending. Alas, so many other places do not. The executive members of the Society have compiled a few properties each where the original building has been demolished. We have attempted to provide a picture from the near past along with a view of the same area today. Come and join the fun!

Acton train station
the glass cubicle that



about 1913 and
replaced it.





Glen Woollen Mills 1913 and 1990



St. George's Anglican Rectory
1990 and St. George's parking lot
2019



IN THE NAME OF "PROGRESS"

Fear Road Improvement Would Ruin Village's Scenic Beauty

A petition sheet hangs in Terra Cotta General Store with about 50 signatures on it. A similar collection of endorsements is posted in Terra Cotta Inn. Two others are circulating through the village.

It's all part of a last ditch effort by Terra Cotta residents to save their village from Peel County's idea of 'progress.' That's not what the villagers call a scheme to reconstruct their winding paved road to super highway proportions. Not when it will spoil one of the most scenic drives in this part of the province, destroy some irreplaceable landmarks, including some homes, and erase the rustic charm of the village.

The road through the village is Sideroad No. 27. While actual widening and other work on the road will not likely begin for another two years, immediate plans call for the construction of a new bridge near Sideroad 27's junction with the 5th Line West.

This would cost somewhere around \$150,000 of which 80 per cent would be provincially subsidized.

But residents aren't convinced a new bridge is really needed. The present structure is not condemned, but a bigger and better bridge, properly aligned would be a necessary first step towards the road project.

Residents and the motoring public are not even complaining about the Terra Cotta road but it is high on the list of county road priorities because of its drainage problems, narrowness, understructure, etc.

Fact is that the Terra Cotta village road carries heavy traffic in the summer enroute to Credit Valley Conservation Authority Park. Faced with the need to improve the road Peel County realized that to qualify for government subsidy the road must be built to standards laid down by the province.

Such standards do not take into account the aesthetic qualities of winding wooded roads or scenery or old landmarks.

Terra Cotta residents fear that if they can't stop the plans they will be left with a community badly scarred from road surgery. Gone will be The Old Forge, home of the famed sculptor Rebecca Sisler, part or all of Terra Cotta Inn, a number of homes and most of the scenery which lures artists and photographers from all over southern Ontario.

Georgetown Herald,
4 Dec. 1969

Target Gas station and convenience store at 51 Guelph Street, Georgetown was demolished in 2005 and is now an empty lot.



The Moore-Ruddell farmhouse at 60 Main Street, North, Georgetown. Weaver's Mill townhomes now occupy the land beside Moore Park plaza.



SS#16 on Trafalgar Road at 22 Sideroad.

Acton (Robert Little) Public School c. 1900.



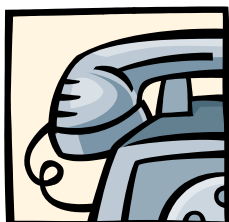


ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

2019

- Wed. 8 **THEY PAVED PARADISE...**
 May 2019 Esquesing has been prosperous and growing throughout its 200-year history which means many buildings have come and gone. EHS executive members have selected several properties in our photo collection that have been demolished. Reminiscences on these properties scattered across the township, will be welcome!
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 116 Main St., S., Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 12 **WALKING TOUR OF ACTON**
 June 2019 A section of downtown Acton will be explored on foot under the direction of historian John Mark Rowe. Highlights will include the Town Hall Centre, McKinnon Funeral Home, Acton Optical, *Moorecroft*, St. Joseph's Church and the post office. Wear walking shoes!
ACTON TOWN HALL CENTRE, 19 Willow Street North, Acton, 7:00 p.m.
- Mon. 1st **WALKING TOUR OF GLEN WILLIAMS**
 July 2019 As part of the annual Canada Day celebration, members are invited to join John Mark Rowe on a walking tour of the village before the parade.
WILLIAMS' MILL, 515 Main Street, Glen Williams, 10 a.m.
- Wed. 11 **THE EARLY YEARS OF ESQUESING TOWNSHIP**
 Sept. 2019 John Mark Rowe begins the celebration of 200 years of settlement by exploring the pre-history, survey and first years of settlement in Esquesing township with a short walk and slide show in the cradle of Esquesing's history.
ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, 10996 Trafalgar Road, Stewarttown, 7 pm

INVITE YOUR NEIGHBOUR TO BECOME A MEMBER!



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
Ray Denny	905 877-3890	Publications
Steve McNamara	519 856-1242	

Society Notes

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

<http://esquesinghistoricalsociety.com/> Note the new website address. Send your e-mail to esquesinghs@gmail.com

EHS NEWSLETTER

John Mark Rowe prepared this newsletter. 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 currently have 76 members for 2019. Our membership year runs from February. Please encourage others to support the EHS by purchasing a membership. The individual membership rate is \$20. The family or institution rate is \$25. The EHS is still very happy to accept personal cheques from our members. Please note that all cheques must be made payable to "Esquesing Historical Society", fully spelled out. Membership fees can be mailed to our post box or payable by cash or cheque to our membership secretary, David Borrett at a public meeting.

CANADIANA ON-LINE

<http://online.canadiana.ca/search>

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

www.archives.gov.on.ca

EHS ARCHIVES

The finding aid for the Esquesing Historical Society Archives often appears when searching in Halton Images. Thanks to Library staff, users can search for specific archives files through the Archives Association of Ontario website, Archeion. Make a visit to www.archeion.ca/esquesing-historical-society and find that information you were looking for!

The Archives were fortunate some time ago to receive an 1856 map of Esquesing School Sections. It needs conservation and the EHS is now launching a fund-raising campaign to help pay for its restoration.

HALTON-PEEL OGS

<https://haltonpeel.ogs.on.ca/>

May 26 -Halton-Peel Genealogy Road Show, Brampton Library, 65 Queen Street 2-4 p.m.

DEVEREAUX HOUSE

Ann Lawlor at ann@devereauxhouse.ca

HALTON HILLS SPORTS MUSEUM

<http://haltonhillssportsmuseum.blogspot.ca/>

Open Saturday 6-9:30 p.m.

June 20 -Hall of Fame Gala at John Elliott Theatre. Tickets available

Feature Sports Kid: Lawson Sherk, captain Halton Hurricanes Minor AAA hockey team.

STREETSVILLE HIST. SOCIETY

The Society Library and Archives are open Wednesdays and Sundays 1-4 p.m. at the Leslie Log Cabin at 4415 Mississauga Road. May 4- Cdn Warplane Museum, Hamilton \$11/ own transport/ lunch \$15 11:30 a.m.

BRAMPTON HIST. SOCIETY

Heart Lake Presbyterian Church at 7:15.

May 16 -Geoff Acheson, *Lighting of the Past*

June 20 -Dave Patterson, *"The Extraordinary Number of Indian Gifts to the World."*

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society meets in the Waldie Blacksmith Shop at 16 James Street at 7:30 p.m.

May 1st -Dorothy Kew, *How do I start my Family History?*

May 16 -*History of Blacksmithing*

Sept. 14 -Fall Garage Sale

OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

<https://www.oakvillehistory.org/>

May 5-Guided tour of Oakville & St. Mary's Cemetery 1:30-3

May 11 -Yard Sale 9-2

May 15 -Mark Rector, *Canadian Inventors and Inventions*

June 16 -Tea on the Bluffs at Sovereign House, 7 West River St., Bronte 11-4

BURLINGTON HIST. SOCIETY

Burlington Public Library at 7 p.m.

May 13 -Barbara Teatero, *Progress on Joseph Brant Museum*

NASAGIWEYA HIST. SOCIETY

info@nasagiweyahistoricalociety.com

TRAFALGAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

TERRA COTTA HALL

Terra Cotta Community Hall rentals:

Contact Kathy Atkinson at

terracottaeventbooking@gmail.com

LOCAL DIGITAL RESOURCES

Our Digital World, host of Halton Hills
newspapers, Halton Images and Halton
News hosts newspapers from across Ontario.

You can start searching at:

<https://ourdigitalworld.net/>

NORVAL RIVIERA HISTORY

The famous Riviera nightclub -lastly known
as Nashville north, is the subject of an
article written by John Mark Rowe for the
Spring issue of *Acorn* magazine. It was
entitled, "Norval's Famous Dance Hall".
The *Acorn* is a publication of Architectural
Conservancy Ontario.

2 July 1919

**Peace Celebration – Thanks to Almighty
God for Great Victory – Big Gathering**

When word was received in town on
Saturday shortly after 12 o'clock that the
peace terms had been signed a half holiday
was declared; whistles blew, bells rang and
citizens began to decorate their homes and
business places with Union Jacks and flags
of the allied nations.

Reeve Grant and members of the Council
got busy, got the band boys and veterans
together and a procession was arranged for
4:30.

The procession headed by the 20th Battalion
Band and our local veterans (which number
some 125) under command of Major G.O.
Brown, proceeded to the Park where the use
of the big Chautauqua tent was kindly
granted by the management. Here Reeve

Grant called the gathering to order; after
singing the National Anthem, Rev. Dr. Cline
offered up a prayer of thankfulness to
Almighty God for the great victory
achieved.

Short speeches followed...

Three cheers for the Empire and our
returned soldier heroes brought the
gathering to a close. (Georgetown Herald)

9 July 1919

Ballinafad: A very pleasant time was spent
last Thursday evening on the lawn of Mr.
Harry Shortill's when the members of the
Ladies' Institute presented our returned
soldier boys with signet locket rings. The
presentation was made by the honorary
president Mrs. Richard Shortill. There were
four of the boys present – George Roszel,
James McKechnie, Bert Sinclair and John
McKay. James Allen having gone west, was
represented by his father. (Herald)

23 July 1919

Big Day at Limehouse: ...Mr. William
Gowdy read a very appropriate address to
the returned soldiers after which twenty of
them were invited to the platform. They
were followed by as many dainty young
maids dressed in white, carrying bouquets
and gold watches, which they presented to
the brave soldiers who in true military
fashion accepted the gift and acknowledged
it by saluting the giver with a token of
peace, a kiss. (Herald)

06 Aug 1919 Garden Party at Glen Park for
Ward 6 soldiers on August 15th and 16th. -
Herald

13 August 1919

**Celebration and Presentation at Norval
Gold Watches and Cheques presented to
War Veterans**

A big celebration and presentation was held
at Norval on Monday, August 4th.

Everybody was out to give a royal welcome
to the boys who went from here. Ward 2
Esquering turned out en masse for the great
event... (Herald)

DOWNTOWN ACTON STORIES



THE TOWN HALL

The question of building a Town Hall was raised in print by H. P. Moore, editor of the *Acton Free Press*, in an editorial 13 January 1881. After a public meeting, it was decided to progress forward by borrowing \$5,500 through public debentures. William H. Storey, glove maker and councillor changed his support for the project and resigned in protest. Nevertheless, a vote by all free-holders on 26 August, resulted in a 50:14 victory. After considering five lots, Council chose the property of Josiah Adams on the south-east corner of Bower and Willow, for \$500.

In March 1882 the construction was tendered to William McCulla of Brampton, for completion in October. However, the construction of the new hall was to be a trial for the Village. In June the workmen started excavating and laying the foundations. They decided to mortar the stones with water and lime mixed with the excavated loam. The architect, upon inspection, condemned the almost completed foundations, saying they had no more strength than mud. The entire foundation was torn up and re-laid.

In August the same mortar problem caused the rear brick wall to be taken down and rebuilt. Everything was behind schedule and costs were climbing! The plasterers did not begin until October, while old-timers shook their heads at the thought of anyone hoping plaster applied in cold weather would hold. The bell arrived from Troy, New York in November. When the bell finally crowned the new structure, a new debate over when the bell should ring erupted.

Council finally moved into their chambers on 1 March 1883. Between 300 and 400 people filled the upstairs auditorium to enjoy the Acton Glee Club, dramatic sketches, a quartet, string orchestra and soloists. The verdict was that the hall was second to none in the province for beauty and acoustics. It had been worth the struggle.

PROSPECT PARK

Two years after the death of Ransom Adams, the Village had a chance to acquire the land which juts into Fairy Lake. Another By-Law vote in 1889 to acquire the property for a public park for \$3000, passed almost unopposed. The Drill Shed was moved



The entrance gates to Prospect Park, erected in 1925 to commemorate Acton's 50th year as a Corporation. EHS11325

here in 1891. In 1906 the *Milton Champion* described the place: "The park is large and encircled by a half mile track. Within the circle are a baseball diamond, tennis court, etc., all level and kept in perfect condition by the caretaker. The turf was velvet-like."

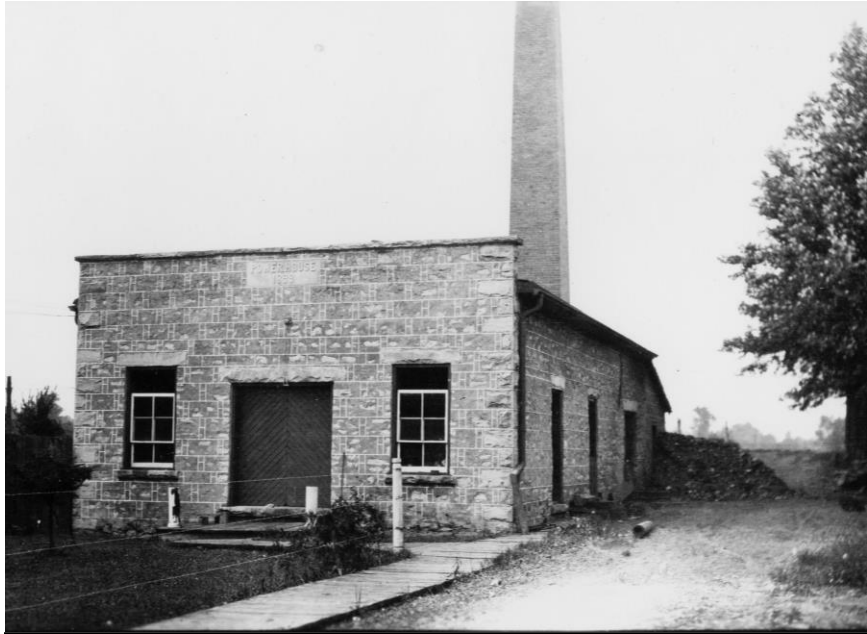
HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER

The Village of Acton had coal oil street lamps installed about 1880, which were lit by a lamp lighter every evening. W. J. Gurney was paid \$100 for the job for the entire year of 1882. These lamps served the village until the end of the century. Postmaster Matthews installed acetylene gas lamps in February 1898, which gave off a powerful light. However, by November 1898 the villagers voted by a large majority to have a hydro-electric lighting plant built.

The powerhouse was erected at the foot of Henderson's Pond, where Willow and River Streets meet and in January 1899 the power was switched on. H. P. Moore noted in the *Free Press*, "Mill Street with its 17 electric lights gives a perspective like a city street." Within a month, Beardmore had 110 lights installed and the Methodist Church was connected.

LATE NEWS: St John's Anglican Church, Stewarttown is celebrating its 185th anniversary on Sunday June 23rd . There will be a service at 10:30 AM, followed by a lunch and an informal time to share stories and pictures.

The power of electricity was soon evident. The 25th May 1899 *Free Press* reported, "By the sagging of an electric light pole, allowing the electric and telephone wires to come into contact, Dr. McKeague's telephone burned out on Fri night. Manager McGrail's time clock was also burned out. The Council had all the posts straightened up and tamped in on Monday."



The powerhouse on Willow Street. The date stone above the door records the 1899 advent of electricity in Acton. Note the dam in the background which supports Henderson's Pond. The chimney became part of Baxter Laboratories after Hurricane Hazel destroyed the dam. EHS11316

Electricity only powered lights at this time and only when the Village decided to switch it on. It went off in the evening when the manager decided it was time for bed. During the winter months it was turned

on for a couple hours in the morning. Before long, the system was showing signs of overload. In January 1907 the Village switched from a flat rate to the meter system. Revenues shot up and the overloads decreased. Nevertheless, in March 1908 Acton joined 70 other applicants to Hydro-Electric Power Commission for power. This Commission, formed in 1906 by Adam Beck, was the world's first nationalized electric utility. By 1910, the Acton plant was loaded to capacity. It limped along until Ontario Hydro came to Acton in 1913.

-Excerpts from: *Acton: The History of Leathertown*, John Mark Benbow Rowe, EHS:2002



WARREN BLOCK

As I look out from my tower by the clock, I recall below and across from me the residence of the late William Steel (27 Mill E.). It stood at the corner of Mill and Willow Streets. One of the big willows,

The Warren Block on the left, across from the Post Office clock tower. EHS11343

which gave the street its name, shaded the home, while another waved its branches over the gateway leading to the barn and farmyard of this homestead...

After the Steel family this was the home of William Williams and family, and they remained until it was moved back to the rear and rebuilt. It is now owned and occupied by Mr. George Roszell (9 Willow N.).

Thirty-six years ago, when the last re-union of the pupils of the late Robert Little was being celebrated, the big willow tree had been cut down and an expansive stump remained. In a jocular mood, Tom Kennedy and Ed McGarvin both made "stump speeches" from this vantage point. During the gathering *The Free Press* distributed souvenir sections of the old willow bearing a historical sketch...

The Warren Block, which covers the Mill Street frontage of the Steel property, had for its tenants the Merchants Bank (25 Mill E.), Wm. Erskine (27 Mill E.), druggist and Gurney Brothers (29 Mill E.), general merchants. The Bank of Montreal, which took over the Merchants Bank, still retains the corner location. M. Pallant followed E.J. Hassard in the occupancy of the centre store of the block (27 Mill E.), and recently enlarged the premises... For several years the Masonic Lodge had the premises above the store until they moved to the fine new premises in the YMCA building.

-an excerpt from 'Acton's Early Days, Recollections of 'The Old Man' as published in The Acton Free Press 1939', *Acton's Early Days*, Dills Printing & Publishing, Acton: 2006

Mill Street from Main Street. EHS11649



Mill Street, Acton, Ont.