

ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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www.esquesinghistoricalsociety.com

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PLAYGROUNDS OF HALTON

W.D. McIlveen

After a person's basic necessities such as food, water and shelter have been secured, typically through some sort of employment, they will often have some time left over. Depending upon one's situation with respect to the amount of time available, financial resources, family commitments and the like, they will frequently seek some sort of entertainment whether it is as simple as reading a book, spending time with family and friends, or attending a place where such fun and entertainment can be found or purchased. The present article deals with the latter and typically the activity takes one from their home to a different but nearby geographical place where the desired entertainment is available.



Fig. 1. Skiing slope at Kelso March 2011

The entertainment might be found in individual pursuits or along with small groups of family and friends. Those activities might include hiking, ice fishing, canoeing, theatre, skiing, ski-boarding, or sailing. In many cases, one may decide to attend much larger gatherings. Some gathering may represent short events of only one or two days. Some might last for a full season or even extend through the full year. Often the larger

gatherings involve some sort of entrance fee that sustains the operation and earns a favorable income for an entrepreneur. In some cases, the fee is set to pay only for the cost of the operation. Almost any of these various kinds of entertainment can be found in Halton and some examples past and present will be mentioned here.

Some early forms of entertainment were to be found on the north shore of Burlington Bay. Residents of Hamilton could take a ferry from the city to places such as the Victoria Pleasure Grounds near Brown's Warf at Aldershot, and later a resort-type setting at Carol's Point. The yacht clubs had large hotels at Brant Inn, Burlington Beach, and Ocean House. Here they would find hotels where they could get away from the hustle and bustle of the city. The hotels would provide some sort of drinking establishment, a place to eat, and a place to dance. There is a dance hall at the rebuilt LaSalle Park pavilion. A more-recent well-known dance hall was the Riviera Club that evolved to become Nashville North. The largest outdoor dance

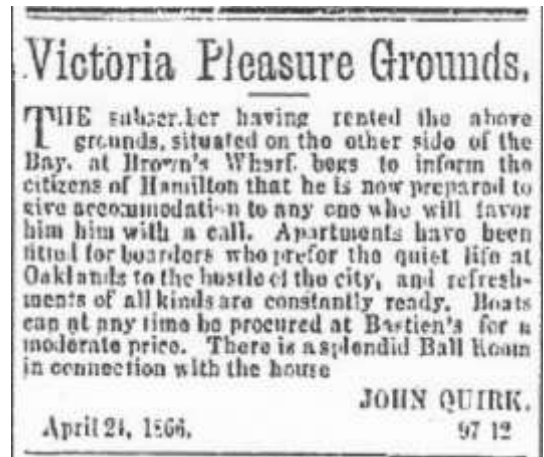


Fig. 2. Advertisement for Victoria Pleasure Grounds near Browns Warf



Fig. 3. Nashville North building at Norval June 2019

floor named the Sky Club was located near the Brant Inn where Spencer Smith Park is currently located. Over time, these and subsequent operations would offer more and more amenities to attract patrons. Gradually different operations focussed on some specific activities.

Amusement parks had pavilions or rides of various sorts like merry-go-rounds at



Bayview Park at Carrol's Point, an amusement park near the Burlington Canal, and the park at LaSalle Park even had a roller coaster. Although it only last for about two years, Oakville had its own Santa Land complete with deer and a frozen North Pole.

**Fig. 4. Roller Coaster at LaSalle Park 1920s
BHS064136**

Swimming was a main attraction for some. These sites included Wabasso Park at the site of LaSalle Park, Burlington Beach, Terra Cotta Playground, Waterfalls Playground, and Kelso Park. Camp grounds are still being run by the Boy Scouts at Blue Springs, at Camp Manitou, and at Mount Nemo. Former WMCA or Town camps were located at Camp Henderson and Pine Ridge in north Oakville and at Camp Norval on the east side of Georgetown.

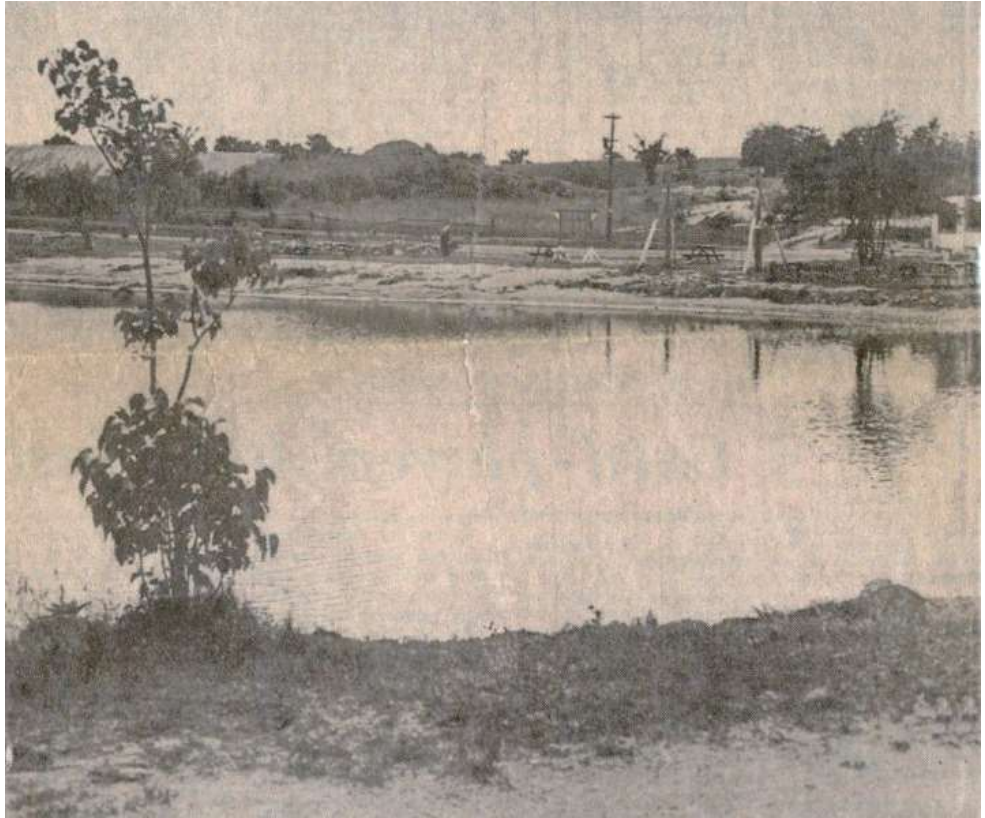


Fig. 5. Waterfalls Playground Pond late 1950s

Other forms of entertainment were the golf courses of which there were at least 36 in Halton. Some of these have been sold for housing developments. Though limited in



Fig. 6. Georgetown Lawn Bowling Club 1907 EHS01193

numbers of people attending, the various town lawn bowling clubs have been existence for about 100 years or more. Although relatively short-lived were the Toronto International Speedway drag strip east of Acton and the go kart track south of Acton.

The remaining agricultural fairs in Halton at Acton, Georgetown and Milton have been in existence as



Fig. 7. Toronto International Speedway 1970 to 1975

far back as 1846. Among other gatherings or places of note are the Highland Games in Georgetown, the Steam Era show near Milton, the Halton Railroad Museum, and the Mohawk Raceway. The largest annual attendance is at the Bronte Creek Provincial Park. And we must not forget firework displays, the basis for which at one time were once produced within the south limits of Esquesing in Milton. Considering all of the possible options, Halton was rather well-supplied with opportunities for entertainment.



Fig. 8. Kart Track Limehouse Photo by Peter Jones



Fig. 9. Acton Fall Fair Cattle Show 1950



The entertainment might be found in individual pursuits or along with small groups of family and friends.

Fig. 10. Milton Steam Era Show General displays September 2019



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

2022

- Wed. 11 May **AMUSEMENT PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS IN HALTON**
Perhaps Halton is not at the top of the list in people's imaginations if the question is asked "Where might the local human population find fun things to do with their leisure time?" But, with a little reflection, a rather long list of sites that have offered some form of recreation can be developed. Not surprisingly, the type of recreation that has been offered has changed over the last nearly 180 years. Bill McIlveen will review the variety of activities that have been available to take our attention away from a more mundane working-day life.
-Knox Presbyterian Church, 116 Main St. S., Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 8 June **ACTON PIONEER CEMETERY & PROSPECT PARK**
Uncover the pioneer families of Acton (figuratively) with EHS historian John Mark Rowe as he leads a tour of the pioneer cemetery cairn in Prospect Park and kick up some dirt in a stroll along the shores of Fairy Lake.
-Prospect Park parking lot, 30 Park Ave., Acton, 7:00 p.m.
- Fri. 1st July **GLEN WILLIAMS WALKING TOUR** -Canada Day celebrations return to the Glen this year. Join John Mark Rowe for a walking tour of Main Street, lasting just over an hour – you'll be able to return to your favourite perch in time to watch the parade go by.
-Williams Mill parking lot, 515 Main Street, Glen Williams, 10 a.m.
- Wed. 14 Sept. **THE QUEEN OF WALKING TOURS**
Queen Victoria, arriving at the Grand Trunk Station, would have enjoyed this tour of the historic street named in her honour! Join EHS historian John Mark Rowe as we explore the architecture and people that helped shape Queen Street since it was laid out in 1854.
-Georgetown GO Station parking lot, 55 Queen Street, Georgetown, 7:00 p.m.

INVITE YOUR NEIGHBOUR TO BECOME A MEMBER!

While all restrictions have been lifted, no refreshments will be served.

MEETING UPDATES: Visit <http://esquesinghistoricalsociety.com>

INQUIRIES: esquesinghs@gmail.com

Society Notes

EHS EXECUTIVE

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Stephen Blake | President |
| Steve McNamara | Treasurer |
| Karen Hunter | Secretary |
| J. Mark Rowe | Archivist |
| David Borrett | Membership |
| Ray Denny | Publications |
| Brandi Gillett | Library Liaison |
| Jan Raymond | Social |

Send all inquiries to: esquesinghs@gmail.com

EHS website:

<http://esquesinghistoricalsociety.com>

EHS NEWSLETTER

John Mark Rowe prepared this newsletter with help from Bill McIlveen. 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 70 paid 2022 members. Our membership year runs from February. 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, dropped off at the home of any executive member or at one of our meetings.

CANADIANA ON-LINE

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

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

www.archives.gov.on.ca

EHS ARCHIVES

The Archives in the Halton Hills Public Library are open during regular library hours. As always, Mark and Karen are working behind the scenes processing donations. Some of the latest donations require many boxes to be shifted in the Archives to make room. Mohawk College Library Technician intern Darlene Anson completed her work on 12 April. She was working remotely to add to Halton Hills Images. She had been adding photos from the 3-4000 collection, all from the 1971 *Georgetown Herald*.

HERITAGE HALTON HILLS

Heritage Halton Hills approved the designation of 26 Queen Street as the McCannah-Biehn House. It will be presented to Council for approval. HHH summer student Dawn Chan began work May 2nd and will be using the EHS Archives from time to time.

The EHS is pleased to continue our partnership in providing images for use in the *Independent Free Press*.

HERITAGE SERVICES IS OPEN FOR RESEARCHERS

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions across the province, businesses are opening up and welcoming visitors back. Heritage Services is accepting onsite researchers again by appointment only.

The facility is at the former Museum in Kelso Conservation Area. To book a research time, please get in touch at <https://www.halton.ca/The-Region>

HALTON-PEEL OGS

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

May 29 – Genealogy Show and Tell at 2 p.m. VIRTUAL

DEVEREAUX HOUSE

Ann Lawlor at ann@devereauxhouse.ca

HALTON HILLS SPORTS MUSEUM

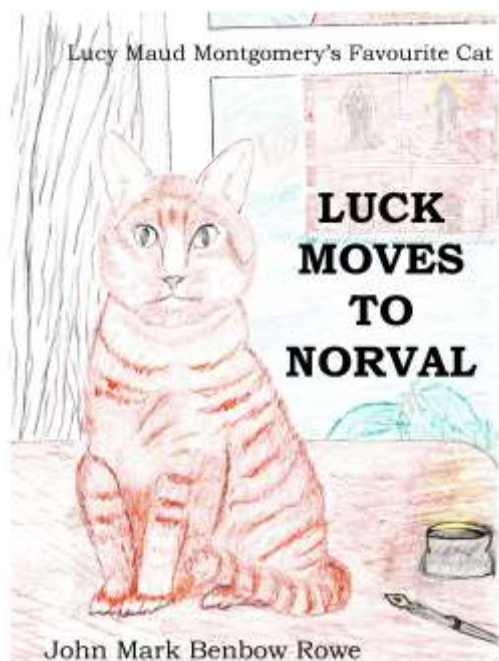
<http://haltonhillssportsmuseum.blogspot.ca/>

The Museum is currently closed. The 2022 Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will take place on June 9th in the Museum, located in Gordon Alcott Hall, Mold-Masters Sportsplex, 221 Guelph St., Georgetown. The inductees will be Barbara Montemurro, Sandy Chapman, Chris Sargent and the Georgetown High School Swim Team.

L.M. MONTGOMERY MUSEUM

The Museum is preparing to launch their long-awaited education kit on Lucy Maud Montgomery’s life in Norval, Ontario. A free kit will be offered to every grade three class in Halton Region this Autumn. It will include a children’s book outlining Montgomery’s move to Norval in 1926, through the eyes of her favourite cat, Good

Luck. This book was made possible by a generous donation by the Retired Teachers of Ontario -RTO/ERO District 15 Halton. *Luck Moves to Norval* will also be made available for sale to the general public and members of the Esquesing Historical Society.



STREETSVILLE HIST. SOCIETY

The Leslie Log Cabin at 4415 Mississauga Road has reopened on Wednesdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m.

STREETSVILLE MILL STONE

A small 18” mill stone was found in the Credit River and donated to the Streetsville Archives. It has J H carved in the stone. This would be from the Hyde Mill which was built along the west side of the Credit River. Interestingly the stone was found south of the mill site and on the east side of the river, no doubt the stone had been carried along by ice in the river. The Hyde Mill burned down in 1867 which means the stone had been in the river for 154 years. The foundation was later used for the hydro power plant and water purification plant for Streetsville.

-Streetsville Historical Society Newsletter, Winter 2022.

Editor's Comment: While this is a cool story, The EHS Archives could never house a mill stone!

BRAMPTON HIST. SOCIETY

May. 19 -*Alison Gammage*, Student and 2021 BHS Paul Hunt Bursary Award Winner -online

June 16 - *Lynne Golding*, "The Mending" her third book- online.

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Waldie Blacksmith Shop at 16 James Street, Milton. May 4th – “Heritage Garden” with Jennifer Mirosolin
May 15 – Historic walking tour of Victoria Square.

OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TBA -Oakville & the Underground Railroad by Dr. Karolyn Smardz Frost via Zoom

NASAGIWEYA HIST. SOCIETY

info@nasagiweyahistoricalsociety.com

TRAFALGAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

May 20 – Open Archives @ 1:30 p.m.

June 7 – Richard Collins on “Coming and Going in Trafalgar Township.” @ 7:00 p.m.

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

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/>

Main Street Market, Glen Williams, opened in the former Arno’s Garage on 30 April 2022.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic elementary school celebrated its 50th anniversary on Wednesday 4th May 2022 with an open house.

Dirty Adventures Scuba, 16 Main St. S. Georgetown opened its doors on 4th May 2022.

'Le petit salon: Canadian Artists and Impressionism' show is on at the Helson Gallery, 9 Church St. until 23 July.



ACTON PIONEER CEMETERY

Established in 1830, the cemetery served the village until the opening of Fairview Cemetery in 1886. In 1933 the stones were gathered into a cairn.



PROSPECT PARK AND FAIRY LAKE

Excerpts from Acton's Early Days by H.P. Moore, 1936

And now to get to the Park. It's between fifty and fifty-five years ago that the land now known as Acton Park was purchased from the late William E. Smith, and became Acton's Fair grounds. The first exhibition held here was in a big canvas tent. That was before the drill hall was moved from Bower Avenue... The drill shed went to the Park about forty-five years ago. It occupied a place where the Arena now stands until that building was erected, about ten years ago. For years the only entrance to Acton Park was by way of Park Avenue. Until 25 or 30 years ago that avenue, known as Knox Avenue, stopped at the entrance to the church sheds. This property was a big pasture field and owned by the late John R. Kennedy. About twenty-five years ago Mr. Kennedy subdivided the property into building lots and where it is thought that the late John Hugh Wallace was the first to erect a residence there which is still owned by his daughter today, Miss Hannah Wallace. Then Alex Bell built a fine brick residence next and Jeremiah Bell built a comfortable home for his mother, when she came to town from out in Nassagaweya. ... But how I've wandered from the Park. The opening of Knox Avenue had a bearing on the Park, for now there were two entrances, and the Knox Avenue way was popular for all those west of Mill Street, and a bit shorter. About twenty years ago a very successful celebration was held in the Park, commemorating Acton's fifty years of incorporation as a village. Strange as it may seem, a good bank balance was left after the affair was over and it was decided the Park entrance should be improved. The fences were set back to their present location and the band stand and ticket office and stone pillars were erected. Further celebrations supplied the balance of funds necessary to complete the work.



But the story of Acton Park is not complete without something about Fairy Lake, which forms such beautiful surroundings for this fine ground. It's just 109 years ago this past summer (1830) since the mill dam was completed that made this splendid body of water. The dam backed up water until it covered 88 acres, as it does today. The flour mill, built by the Adamses, stood where Lindsay's mill is today, and the saw mill – discontinued seventy years ago was just below where the present cement waste-way and overflow is situated. For about fifty years Fairy Lake was always referred to as "The Mill Pond".



Eventually, Mrs. Sarah Augusta Secord, who settled here in the sixties, an educated woman of an aesthetic temperament, gradually succeeded in persuading our citizens that an expanse of such clear crystal spring water, with the environment of wooded hills, and cultivated farms, and pretty village homes and home surroundings, should drop its commonplace name and be honoured with a more dignified cognomen. Mrs. Secord christened it

EHS14628 "Fairy Lake", and Fairy Lake is the euphaneous name it has carried for the past sixty years.... In the subdivision of the Adams farms, when Acton was largely surveyed into village lots, the peninsula jutting into the lake,... was secured by Ransom Adams, a nephew of the founders. This property contained fourteen acres, as it does today. Its shores were also wooded... There were cedars and birch and wild cherry and balm of gilead and basswood. In those days we boys, after a dip in the lake, at the present old swimming' hole, would regale ourselves with cherries from the black and fire cherry trees and carrots from the field of white carrots, which was invariably the crop then grown by "Old Ransom"...

In those early days there was fine trout-fishing in the old mill pond. Speckled trout, and no amount of other fish abounded there. There were a number of boats and punts on the pond and these facilitated the sport of the fisherman when in quest of "speckled beauties". EHS18846

