



Various residents of Midhurst, and those who have been part of the Midhurst Hall Board and Recreation Association have provided the Township with history on the Midhurst Community Centre to assist with the Heritage Evaluation. Below is a summary of the key points provided by these members.

Les Stewart

Mr. Stewart provided information from two books, the Pioneer History of Midhurst (PHOM), A History of Vespra Township (AHOVT), and newspaper articles from the Barrie Examiner, as well as his own comments on the history.

- While the current structure, what we know as the Midhurst Community Centre, MCC was built in 1927, was constructed of timbers from the original Town Hall, 1854. These "bones" have served our community for 164 years. PHOM pg. 36, AHOVT, pg. 111.
- Township Council meetings were held in this building from 1927 to 1967. AHOVT pg. 114
- The building was primarily a civic, political structure.
- All of the Midhurst churches (Presbyterian/United, Anglican, Baptist) held their services in the hall before their own buildings were completed. PHOM pg. 36. Last time I checked there is a congregation right now, carrying on that tradition.
- Hon. Charles Stewart, M.P., Minister of the Interior, officially opened the hall on December 12, 1927. Mr. Stewart had served as Premier of Alberta after being a Midhurst farmer for 20 years. Jane Russell Sneath was his wife who was George Sneath's daughter. In 1856, Oliver's Mill was renamed to "Midhurst" in 1856. PHOM pg. 75-78.
- The financing of the structure is interesting. The vast majority of the funds (debt which was repaid) and donated labour, were from community members. Vespra Township only contributed \$1,000. Please see an attached copy of a December 12, 1927 Barrie Examiner article: "Big Expansion Announced for Forestry Station at Midhurst"
- In 1978, when the municipality didn't require it any longer, the Township Hall was offered to the community of Midhurst to be used as a community centre. It was agreed that the community would purchase the hall for the sum of \$1 from the Township. Those who were present will remember one pessimist who wondered where the dollar would come from. *Midhurst Historical Society*, AHOVT pg. 114.
- The Midhurst Community Centre has always been renovated to keep up with the times and in an exceptionally responsible, financial manner. Just a few of the renovations include: heating systems (wood, oil and natural gas), washrooms (outhouse, indoor), stage +/-, etc.
- The hall has been essential for holding annual events such as Autumnfest, Winterfest, and the Soapbox Derby, etc.



Paul & Carol Fleming

Mr. & Mrs. Fleming provided copies of brochures and maps for Midhurst, as well as a copy of the poster for the opening of the Township Hall in 1927. These have been attached for reference. As well, they provided their knowledge of the Hall which has been summarized below.

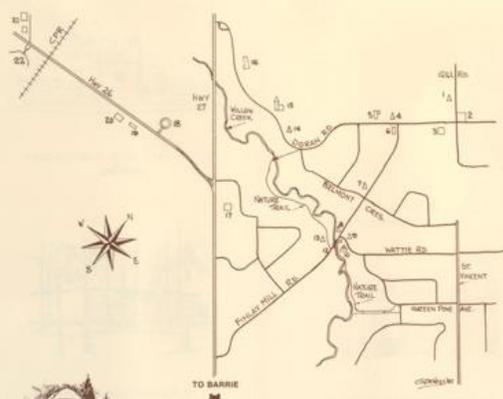
- The Midhurst Hall has been the recreational, and cultural hub of the community. It has held the United Church's suppers, been the location to prepare the Midhurst Newsletter, drama plays, cards, shuffle board, etc.
- The Hall has been the focal point for the South Springwater Soccer Association, baseball teams in the area and the Hall Board has funded many different community projects including new baseball diamonds.
- The Hall was the location for Vespra Township Council meetings up until 1967. The original safe is still located downstairs.
- In 1968, the Midhurst Hall Board was established.
- Hall Board has been instrumental in maintaining and updating the building including:
 - Renovations in the late 60s, early 70s.
 - Structural work was also done on the Hall in 1992-1993, to reinforce the building buttresses were used
 - New washrooms were added as an addition to the building
 - In 1994, the stage where the drama plays were held was removed to allow for more space in the facility. The stage had been there since the opening in 1927.
- The Hall is the hub of Autumnfest
- Many different community organizations have and still use the Community Centre including the Springwater Vespra Lions Club and various churches within the area



Come and Enjoy...



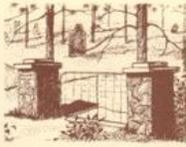
The Scenic Beauty of the Pioneer Village of MIDHURST



11-12 Entrance to Nature Trail

Commemorative Stone Plaques

- 1. Pioneer School House
- 4. Blacksmith Shop
- 7. Planing Mill
- 8. Saw Mill
- 9. Soap Factory
- 13. Electric Power House
- 14. Sneath Homestead



2. Pioneer Cemetery 1831-1896



3. Presbyterian Church 1887
United Church 1925



5. Community Centre



6. Ye Olde General Store and Library

GENERAL INFORMATION

MIDHURST is a beautiful and unique village with Willow Creek winding through its midst. The first known pioneers to settle in this community came in 1820. The village was first known as Oliver's Mills. When George Sneath settled here in 1842 he soon became a moving force in the village and retained the name Midhurst, after his home town in England, and with which we are now favored.

2. **PIONEER CEMETERY:** This land was donated by William Cummings in 1831 and continued as the cemetery until 1896. Because of the hard times during its use, many graves were left unmarked. The Midhurst Historical Society started restoration in 1979.

3. **MIDHURST UNITED CHURCH:** Midhurst Presbyterian Church was built in 1887, a lovely frame building, later bricked. The old church, because of its appearance, might well be the original of the name. The Little Brown Church in the Oak Street Church Union in 1925 the Church has been known as The Midhurst United Church.

5. **MIDHURST COMMUNITY HALL:** The first Township Hall was built in 1934 and served the community for 81 years. Torn down in 1927, some of the timbers were used to build the present hall that same year. There was a see-saw battle over the site, older villagers wanting it in the village, the other group at the Refinery Station.

6. **YE OLDE GENERAL STORE:** was opened in 1912 on the front part of the Boyce family home. In 1946 Marley Schanden rebuilt the store. In 1976 the present store was added by the Walter Radtowsky family. The Midhurst branch of Vespra Library has been temporarily situated here since 1981.

10. **CARNE:** built in 1870 to honour the Pioneers of the Midhurst Community. The symbols - School Bell (Education), Milestone (Industry), Cross (Religion).

15. **ST. PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH:** The Anglican congregation was formed by Canon Morgan of Barrie and services were held in the Township Hall from 1860. The Church was built in 1881 and celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 1981. Rev. Edwin Daniels was first priest in charge of the Church.

16. **FOREST HILL SCHOOL:** In 1850 a frame school was built just south of Pioneer Cemetery and served until 1886. It was moved downtown for one year, just west of the fourth line and east of the new school. A two-room school replaced it in 1887 and served until 1962, when the present school was built.

17. **VESPRA MUNICIPAL OFFICES, MIDHURST 1978 - MEMORIAL 1981:** The above office, hidden from the highway by woods, has a unique sign placed on Highway 27. The sign serves as a memorial to Alexander Bevan Coult - Clerk of Vespra 1907-62.

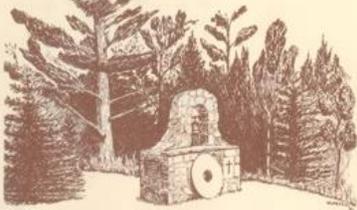
18. **SIMCOE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, MIDHURST 1973**

19. **SIMCOE COUNTY ARCHIVES, MIDHURST:** The Simcoe County Archives opened in 1966 as the first county archives in Ontario.

20. **SIMCOE COUNTY MUSEUM, MIDHURST:** This Museum was opened to the public in 1962.

21. **MIDHURST FOREST TREE NURSERY, Ministry of Natural Resources:** Up until 1875 excellent stands of pine timber and hardwood grew in the region. With constant cutting and no replanting it became a barren, sandy waste. The Hon. E.C. Duggan, then Premier of Ontario, established the present site in 1922. Between 8 and 10 million trees are produced yearly.

22. **SPRINGWATER PARK:** was started in 1902 as a source of water supply for the Refinery Station. Falls were spanned in pools here to stock lakes and rivers. Now a Provincial Park, it is a popular day-use park enjoyed by families or groups of all ages.



10. Cairn commemorating Pioneers of Midhurst



15. St. Paul's Anglican Church 1881



17. Vespra Municipal Building



16. Forest Hill School



18. Simcoe County Administration Building



19. Simcoe County Archives



20. Simcoe County Museum



21. Midhurst Forest Tree Nursery
Ministry of Natural Resources



22. Springwater Park



Lilac Emblem of Vespra

Sponsored by Seniors of Midhurst



SUPPER - PROGRAMME — DANCE —

**A Whole Night's Fun
for a Dollar**

AT THE OPENING OF THE

NEW TOWNSHIP HALL

at MIDHURST on

FRI. DEC. 9 ¹⁹²⁷

**THE HON. CHAS. STEWART
and HON. WM. FINLAYSON**

will give the opening addresses. Other speakers, including our popular member MR. BOYS, are expected to be present. These speeches will be interspersed with selections by the

VARIETY PROGRAMME COMPANY

SUPPER WILL BE SERVED FROM 5.00 TO 8 P.M. THE PROGRAMME will commence at 8 p.m., and will be followed by dancing.

EVERYBODY WELCOME.

ADMISSION \$1.00

Music Supplied by Two Skilled Orchestras

The Barrie Examiner

December 12, 1927

Big Expansion Announced for Forestry Station at Midhurst
Output is Expected to Reach 10,000,000 Trees a Year in Seven Years

Hydro Service Mooted

Good Times for Midhurst Predicted at Opening of New Hall

Big development for the Midhurst Forestry Station was predicted by Supt. Lane when speaking at the opening of the new community hall at Midhurst last Friday night. Mr. Lane said that increasing numbers of men would be employed as the years pass and the work steadily expanded. At the end of seven years, it is expected the annual output will reach ten million trees. Announcement was also made that an effort will be made to secure an extension of the Hydro service from Barrie to supply light and power for this neighbourhood.

To mark the opening of the fine new community hall, the committee in charge arranged a supper, entertainment and dance and a capacity crowd was attracted to the affair. People were present from nearly every part of the township, quite a number from Barrie and some from outside points.

Mr. Stewart Warmly Welcomed

Chief among the speakers was the Hon. Charles Stewart, M.P. of Ottawa, Minister of the Interior, who has had a distinguished career in provincial and federal politics since leaving Midhurst twenty-one years ago. The Minister of the interior was given a most cordial reception from his old friends. He was genuinely glad to be among them again and they were unfeignedly delighted to have him for, as one of them expressed it in his speech, "he is just the same genial, unaffected, kindly, friendly Charlie Stewart that we knew as a Midhurst farmer over twenty years ago." Mrs. Stewart, whose father was clerk of Vespra for over half a century, accompanied her husband and found much enjoyment in meeting again friends of earlier days. Among other "Old Boys" present were John W. Garvin and George Garvin of Toronto. One of the features of the evening was the reading of a paper by Miss Isabel Sneath, sister of Mrs. Stewart, on "The Old Town Hall." This appears elsewhere in this issue.

Supper, served from 5:30 to 8:30, formed a very important part of the evening's function. Tables in the commodious basement were covered with a variety of appetizing viands such as the ladies of Midhurst know well how to prepare. A biting wind gave an edge to the appetites but the generous program made was more than ample for everyone.

A Lengthy Programme

It was somewhat of a marathon programme that was run off under the chairmanship of Reeve Wilson. There were about two dozen items and a day was out but fifteen minutes from swinging on the hinges of midnight when the National Anthem brought it to a close.

Enthusiastic applause and cheers greeted the Hon. Charles Stewart, the first speaker called upon. In thanking the audience for such a hearty welcome, he said he could not help feel a tinge of sadness at missing the faces of many old friends who had passed on. He was, however,



pleased to see their sons and daughters taking the places of their parents and filling them, he felt, with credit to themselves and to their family names.

Mr. Stewart congratulated the committee upon the fine hall, which was quite in keeping with Midhurst's reputation for progress. Such halls mean a great deal in the building up of a strong and cordial community spirit.

A Land of Opportunities

He recalled that he came to Midhurst as a boy in 1884 and left for the West in 1906. For over twenty years he has been in public life in which he has learned to take not a few hard knocks but had also found many compensations. Speaking to his young hearers particularly, he impressed the fact that Canada is a land of wonderful opportunity to those who will diligently and intelligently apply themselves and that there are great opportunities in agriculture as another profession. And while striving for success in material things, they should not forget the cultivation of integrity, sobriety and other cardinal virtues that have made British citizenship famous throughout the world. With a citizenry actuated to the high ideals of British justice there would be no question of Canada placing her full part as a worthy daughter of the Motherland.

The Hon. Wm. Finlayson, M.P., Minister of Lands and Forests, expressed his pleasure at being present at the opening of the hall and the welcome to Mr. Stewart who was a fine illustration of the fact that Simcoe sons could hold their own anywhere. Halls such as this one were doing a great deal for community life throughout the province. He urged his hearers to take full advantage of it.

Timber a Crop

Mr. Finlayson assured the audience that the Midhurst Forestry Station would be steadily developed. He urged the farmers to take full benefit of Mr. Lane's advice. There is not a farm in the county but has five acres that could be planted with trees to advantage.

"We have acted like fools with our forests," declared the Minister. "Timber is as much a crop as is wheat but we have treated it as a mineral." The planting will bring big returns in the future years. One German town has had freedom from taxes for three years through returns from its municipal forests.

Mr. Finlayson stated that the extension of the Hydro system from Barrie to serve the C.P.R., the Forestry Station and farmers along the route was being considered. He did not see why they should not have as cheap rates as anywhere in Ontario and hoped that they would be able to get the plan through.

Pioneer Adventures

John W. Garvin entertained the audience with some amusing experiences of his boyhood days at Midhurst there his father came from Linden, Ohio 63 years ago, to farm and run a mill. Those were the days when 2-foot logs were the usual mill run and when clear pine sold for \$20 per 1000. Mr. Garvin's adventures included being treed by an infuriated she-bear from Midhurst to Barrie and several other incidents.



Pictures Presented

Miss Sneath, before reading her paper, presented to the committee for hanging in the hall a large framed photo of her father, George Sneath, clerk of Vespra from 1854 to 1907. A group photo of the 1927 township council also was presented. In accepting these, Morgan Orrock, secretary of the committee, said they had also been promised framed photos of Mr. Stewart and Mr. Finlayson.

W. L. Russell, chairman of the building committee, said the erection of a hall had first been discussed a year ago but the building did not start till September. The committee had given a lot of time to the work for the benefit of the community, to make Midhurst a better place to live in. He hoped that the hall would be so conducted that even those who opposed the project will be pleased.

Midhurst to Boom

G. B. Lane, Supt. of the Forestry Station, predicted decided development for Midhurst. "Mr. Finlayson has asked that our output be increased far beyond our idea. This year we put out over a million trees. Next year, our output will be two millions and by the end of seven years we should be sending out from this station ten million trees in a year. We have been employing a goodly number of men but this will mean a steady increase until there will not be a vacant house within reasonable distance of the station. This will mean more money in circulation and things will be quite as good as they were in the old days. We have a group of young men coming on in this community that are just as good as any who have lived here before." He predicted that the Forestry Station would become a centre of interest that would attract visitors from long distances. Mr. Lane congratulated the committee on the hall. With all the community pulling together they should have many happy and interesting times there.

Short speeches were made by Stewart L. Page who spoke on the proposed agricultural classes of the B.C.I., Rev. W. E. Wallace, C. M. Hickling, Deputy-reeve James Doran and M. T. Orrock. Recitations were given by Miss Aitchison, Mrs. James Handy and R. D. Coutts, a reading by W. Kennedy, vocal solos by Andrew Orchard, Eitel Bishop and Mayor Ego of Penetang. A number of selections were played by the Lennox Orchestra of Barrie.

Tripped the Light Fantastic

The programme over, the hall was speedily cleared and nearly everybody present proceeded to enjoy a real old-time sociable dance. Reeve Alex Wilson and Deputy-reeve James Doran setting an example with an enthusiasm quite equal to that of their younger constituents. The Hon. Chas. Stewart and Mrs. Stewart and the Messrs. John and George Garvin also participated to show that they had not forgotten how to "balance on the corner," etc., etc. George Garvin also showed the young chaps that he still retained his old-time agility by doing the "stump-leg" and a step dance. Jim Coutts did the calling off and did not find it very easy work making himself heard with 60 to 70 couples crowded on the floor. Spirited music was provided by Albert Dwyer, violin, and Mrs. Donald Bonney, piano; later by Mr. and Miss Miles of Minesing.



The New Hall

The new hall is built west of Smith's store on a lot donated by Mrs. Thomas Spence. It is of solid concrete block with cottage roof. The size is 30 by 60 with ample stage and a 9-foot basement which contains a kitchen and a vault for township records, etc. The auditorium is sheeted in paneled Gyproc with ceiling of B.C. fir. Reg Lytton had the contract for concrete and the Barrie Planing Mill for carpentering. Much labor was contributed. Little more than two months was occupied in construction.

This hall is valued at in the neighbourhood of \$4000 and is financed by private subscriptions except for \$1000 from the township council. It is to be turned over to the council as it is to serve both as a township hall and a community centre. Among recent subscriptions were sums from George Garvin, Jos. L. Garvin, Chas. Wattie and C. M. Hickling. Friday night's affair yielded \$270. With the exception of a few hundred dollars, the cost of the hall is all provided for.

Those on the building committee are W. L Russell (chairman), A. A. Garvin (treasurer), Albert Dwyer and Robt. Wattie.

19271215 Big expansion



THE • BARRIE • EXAMINER

CIRCULATION
THIS WEEK

4625 COPIES

64th Year

BARRIE, CANADA, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1927.

No. 49.

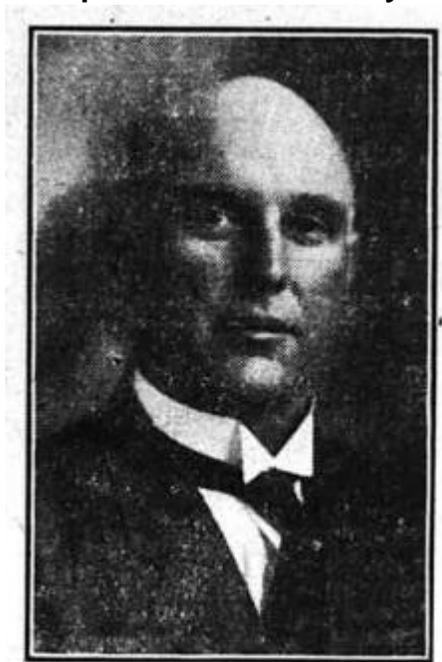
16 PAGES

SECTION 1
PAGES 1 TO 8

The Barrie Examiner

December 8, 1927

Speaks Here on Friday



THE HON. CHARLES STEWART

Who addresses Kiwanis Club and Women's Canadian Club to-morrow and speaks at the opening of the new hall, Midhurst, at night.

Source: <http://news.ourontario.ca/Barrie/2755271/page/1>

19271208 Speaks here



The Barrie Examiner

Thursday, August 11, 1932

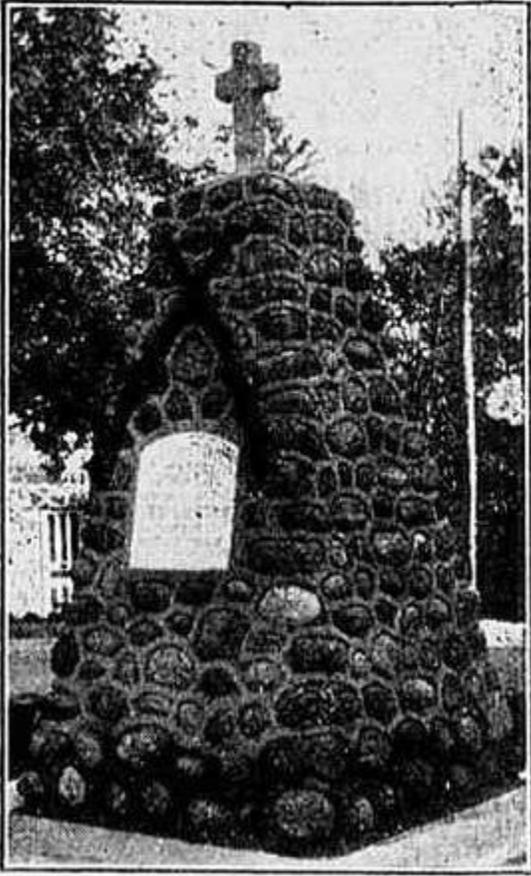
Vespra War Memorial Unveiled at Midhurst at 5th Legion Reunion

Ceremony Performed by Maj.-Gen. Cartwright of Toronto

LEGION FIELD DAY

Programme Carried Out Under Auspices of Vespra Post

VESPRA WAR MEMORIAL



Following is the list of Vespra men who fell in the Great War, and to whose memory the memorial now stands in Springwater Park, Midhurst.

Frederick Benson
Ernest Cloughley
Ernest A. Finlay
Frederick Higgins
H. Roy Hodgson
George Hodgson
James Miller Johnston
Arthur Jacobs
William Lang
Harry Lyfyt
Sidney Lennox
Harry Leggott
Robert Morgan
John Muir
Garnet Maw
M. Francis McAvoy
George Pringle
James Henry Priest
Roy Pratt
William Parke
Edwin Ruffett
Darcy Reynolds
William Ward

—Photo by Jackson.

In the presence of representative of the Canadian Legion from various parts of the county and of many citizens of the township, a war memorial for Vespra's sons who gave their lives in the Great War was unveiled at Springwater Park, Midhurst, on Monday afternoon, August 8. It had been expected that Gen. D. C. Draper of Toronto would do the unveiling, but he was unable to attend and Maj.-Gen. Geo. S. Cartwright, P.B., C.M.G., Toronto, came in his stead. The ceremony was one of the features of the annual re-union of the Simcoe County War Veterans, sponsored this year by the Vespra Post of the Canadian Legion.

The Memorial

The memorial cairn, which was erected on the suggestion of the Vespra Post, is composed of field stone gathered from the neighborhood. Douglas Ronald of Minesing designed it and the construction was done by Harvey Spence and Robert Mills, Midhurst. On the north face is a tablet, surmounted by crossed rifles, with the following inscription:

Lest We Forget
1914-1918
In Memory of the Vespra Boys
who died in the
Great War
Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori

In the south side a drinking fountain has been placed and above it are the very fitting words: "Through sacrifice we drink of life."

The Latin inscription on the memorial, translated, is: "It is sweet and becoming to die for one's country."

The memorial has a charming location. It faces a pretty lily pool; on either side are beautiful white birches, while behind are glimpses of the springwater and the rock garden, with evergreens in the background. Money for the monument was raised by private subscription, supplemented by a small grant from Vespra township council.

The Unveiling

A sharp shower sent the people scurrying to cover about the time set for the ceremony but a few minutes later, the sun shone brightly when the veterans, led by Collingwood Kiltie Band, marched down the road and took their places on either side of the monument.

The brief dedicatory services were conducted by Rev. George Pogson of Minesing, chaplain of Vespra Post, and were followed with reverential attention by the large gathering present. "O Canada" by the band and the hymn, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past." Rev. F. G. Stotesbury of Minesing read the Scripture lesson and Rev. Wm. Newman of Craighurst led in prayer.

Mr. Pogson in a short address, said that it was impossible to help those who had fallen in the war. They had sacrificed all that was dear to them but they asked nothing except that their memory might be respected. "This little memorial," he said, "is the least we can do to show our appreciation for what they did for us and it will be little indeed if we do not strive so to live that their dreams for the land they loved so well may be realized."

Maj.-Gen. Cartwright, after drawing the Union Jack which veiled the memorial, said "We unveil this monument to show honor and respect for those from Vespra who fell in the Great War. A cairn built of stone from nearby fields and constructed by local men seems especially suitable. Those who served in the war need no monuments to preserve its history and lessons, but it is very necessary to have monuments to remind the younger generation of what has happened."



Favors Military Training

The speaker said he was proud of being a Canadian and a Britisher and had served 35 years in the British Army. He did not agree with those who said military training should be abolished. "Disarmament will come eventually but until all nations disarm equally and until the present disturbed atmosphere passes," he declared, "no nation can afford to go unprepared, even though we all hope there will be no more war."

He said that one of the main objects of military training was to produce good citizens and there was no better citizen than the British soldier. Military training teaches young men to be smart, punctual and respectful to others.

In conclusion, he said, "While we remember the past, we must do all we can to help those not in the best of luck and give a helping hand. Let us remember the living while we respect the dead."

After wreaths had been laid on the memorial by representatives of Penetang, Midland, Collingwood, Orillia and Vespra branches. Bugler Bob Peacock of Midhurst sounded The Last Post, and the service concluded with the National Anthem.

Veterans of 1885

Two veterans of the North West Rebellion were present in the persons of George H. Munro of Thornton and James Caston of Craighurst. The former belonged to No. 3 Co. of the Simcoe Foresters and the latter to No. 1 Co. They left Barrie on April 2, 1885, under Col. W. E. O'Brien and prior to Monday had met only once since 1885. On their trip west they went on the C.P.R. but had to march the incomplete gaps on this road, running from 20 to 40 miles. They recalled that they were nearly frozen on one of these marches, when the mercury dropped to 40 below zero. Mr. Caston says there is only one other member of his company living, Sergt. John McMullen of Midland. Mr. Munro could think of only three of his company now living, Joe Lang, Frank Perkins and Peter Curtiss, all of Barrie.

Among the visitors was Maurice Child of New York City, Past President of the British War Veterans of the U.S.A., and editor of their official paper. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Black Watch and on the last visit of the Prince of Wales to the U.S.A. was detailed as his personal escort. He and Mrs. Child motored over to Canada to visit Rev. Wm. and Mrs. Newman, Craighurst. Another guest at the Craighurst rectory, present on Monday, was Rev. J. O. Ralston of Winnipeg, former chaplain of the Royal Canadian Dragoons. These visitors spoke very highly of the appropriateness of the memorial and the beauty of its setting.

<http://news.ourontario.ca/Barrie/2756722/page/1>

For a Springwater Township park and growth issues archive see:
<http://springwaterparkcitizenscoalition.wordpress.com/media-stories/>

Brought to you by the Springwater Park Citizens' Coalition: <http://SpringwaterParkcc.org>

19320811 Vespra war



The Barrie Examiner

December 18, 1927

When Midhurst Had Distillery And, Later, 5 Mills Operating

Thriving Lumbering Centre; Called "Oliver's Mills" in Early Days

MILLS BURNED IN 1887

Pioneer History Given By Miss Sneath at Opening of New Hall



At the opening of the new township and community hall at Midhurst, last Friday night, Miss Isabel Sneath, whose father was township clerk when the old hall was erected, gave the following interesting sketch on the Midhurst of early days.

The old Vespra town hall was erected in the year 1855. Prior to 1854 the townships of Vespra, Flos and Sunnidale were united as one municipality. Barrie being part of Vespra. In that year Barrie was incorporated as a town and Flos became a separate municipality. It was at that time my father was appointed clerk of the united townships of Vespra and Sunnidale. These two

townships were separated the following year and the council of Vespra built a hall at what was then known as Oliver's Mills to be used for municipal purposes. As there were then practically no settlers west of the 7th concession except a few on the Sunnidale road at what was known as the "Upper Settlement," now Grenfel, the eastern part of the township, therefore, bore the greater part of the expense of the building. Lumber in those days was not very valuable and would cost a trifle compared with its present value. The materials for the building were no doubt hauled mostly by oxen, as I find in some notes of my father's that in 1843 there was only one horse owned in Vespra west of the Penetang Road settlements. Ten years may have altered conditions considerably, but one may conclude that horses were at least not very plentiful. When the hall was built it consisted of only one large room, the two small rooms being added in 1874. At that time No. 4 company of the 35th Regiment had its headquarters at Midhurst, with Alexander Russell as Captain and the back room of the hall was fitted up for storing the rifles and other equipment belonging to it. Later when James Ward became Captain the stores were moved to Barrie.

One cannot write any history of the hall without giving some history of the immediate neighborhood. About the years 1830, one George Oliver got a grant of the water power and two hundred acres of land on condition that he should build and operate a grist and flour mill thereon. This he did and also built and operated a distillery where whiskey was sold at twenty-five cents a gallon. The distillery was abandoned in 1851. It stood very close to where the county road crosses the stream.

Among the first settlers of the neighborhood was Robert McGowan. So far as I can find out, the only one of that date, 10830, whose descendants are still to be found here. From 1841 to 1852 Henry Boys owned the mills. They were operated later by Leadlay and Ray Thomas Robinson and again by Robert Leadlay. The mills were burned down in 1887.

Let us try to picture the Midhurst of 10854, though until ten years later when the post office was opened it was known as Oliver's Mills. The whole country was covered with a dense pine forest with only here and there a small clearing where the early pioneer had cleared a few acres for crops which were garnered with the sickle and the scythe, and had erected a small log house to shelter his family. The nightly howling of the wolves was one of the commonplaces of life. The pines, far from being thought valuable, were considered cumberers of the ground, and were cut down and burned in huge log piles. For many years progress was slow, money was scarce, the small clearings produced little more than sufficed for the actual needs of the settlers. Roads were scarcely passable except in winter. Gradually these conditions changed and when improvement began its progress was rapid. With larger clearings and fields freed from stumps the aid of farm machinery became possible. The sickle gave place to the cradle, for the scythe was substituted the mower and the drill for the seed basket. Then came the Northern Railroad and Midhurst became a thriving lumbering village and fortunes were made here. For a number of years there were four saw mills in operation on the stream within a very short distance.

To return to the town hall, Until the Township Agricultural Society was united with the county society, the township fairs were held at the hall and very successful fairs they were, the park being the fair ground. The farmers from the Penetang Road, then famous breeders of thoroughbred cattle and sheep, exhibited their stock here, while field and garden produce from all parts of the township filled the hall. During the '70s and '80s the hall became the centre of the religious and social life of the district. Church of England and Methodist services were held there from early in the seventies. The first Sunday School was, I think, started by Mr. Cook about 1873. Later Charles Anderson, who owned a saw mill about where the C. P. R. crosses the stream, was superintendent of a very successful Sunday School. After Mr. Anderson moved to



Anten Mills, the school was carried on for some time with Wm. Williams in charge. About 1880 the Methodist services were discontinued though quarterly meetings for the township were held there for many years later. Early in the eighties Presbyterian services were started and were continued in the hall till St. Paul's Church was built.

Once or twice a year the hall was the scene of a grand ball. I don't know who were responsible for getting up these dances, but with four saw mills and a grist mill so close, and also a shingle mill at the foot of Dunn's hill, there would be no lack of dancers. Incidentally there were always plenty of empty whiskey bottles in the shed the morning after one of these dances.

A temperance society called the Canadian Templars held meetings in the hall from about 1867 to 1870, and in the seventies and early eighties the Independent Order of Good Templars had quite a strong lodge, some of the leading members of which were Jas., Chas. and George Coutts, Geo. E. Sneath, Dave and Fred Garvin, Leuty Robertson, Chas., Thos. and Annie Drury. In connection was quite a clever dramatic club.

Some of the Reeves and Councillors of an early date that one might mention are Miles Kenney who was, I think, a member of the first council. Jonathan Sissons Sr. and his son also Jonathan Sissons who was reeve for a number of years. John Wallwin, Robert Leadlay, Thos. Robinson, John Darby, Garvin Charles Wattie, Frank Dunn, Henry Parr, Alexander Smith, John Johnston.

Elections in those days were not the quiet orderly affairs they are today. Liquor flowed freely, and as the voting was not by ballot, but as each voter came in he named whom he wished to vote for and the vote was then recorded in the poll book by the returning officer, there were many fights and broken heads over the recording of the votes and many plots to keep some from voting. Not that such schemes are unknown now but less direct methods than physical force are used in these modern times.

In conclusion, I wish to congratulate you on this splendid new hall which you have erected here and hope that it may render as good service to the future generations of Midhurst as the old hall did for the past, and as we think of those pioneers let us remember

That for them no mystic music filled the air,
No speeding motor whisked them where they would.
Theirs was a life of weary toil and care,
With simple pleasures of their neighbourhood.

Because they labored thus in former day,
Nor failed, or failing, ever strove again;
We gladly claim the land that now we sway,
And proudly hail this wondrous rich domain.

Then let us all join hand in solemn thought,
And bow the head in honor to the past,
Determined that our future shall be fraught,
With pioneering courage to the last.

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